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The European Cup R.I.P.

SHABANI NONDA
The new George Weah

DAVID PLATT
Serie A's youngest manager

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

BATISTUTA
Fiorentina's purple prince cuts loose

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GHANA'S YOUNG STARS BARRY FERGUSON FEYENOORD

Scientists find new product that can increase your stamina, power and strength by up to 25%

Research shows Creatine can help Sportsmen such as Footballers and Rugby players produce more explosive power for longer, as well as increase recovery after intense exercise

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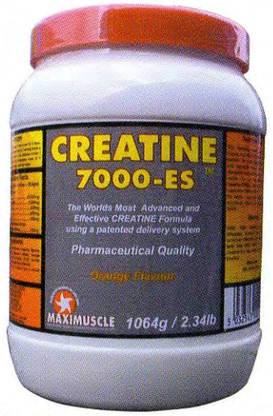

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What can Creatine do for me:

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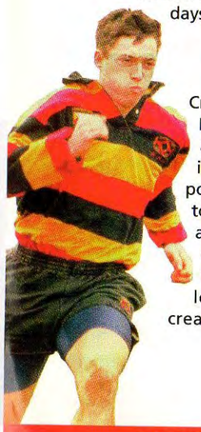

How can Creatine help me...

Creatine is virtually made for Footballers, Rugby players and Athletes. Creatine will increase your stamina, kicking power and speed. If you want it to increase your muscle size and strength it will. Anyone doing physical sport will benefit from the increased lean muscle and strength creatine offers.

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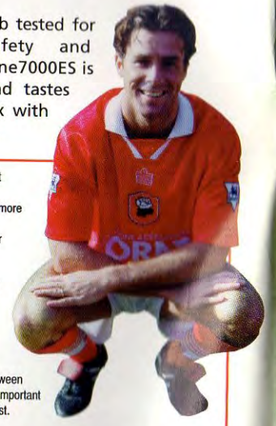

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Ashley Ward - Professional Footballer

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Director - Maximuscle

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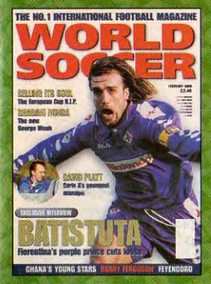

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Executive Editor Keir Radnedge
Editor Gavin Hamilton
Art Editor Gary Payne
Picture Editor Duncan Bond
Editorial Secretary June Hiscock

Thanks this issue to:
David Prole, Peter Neish, Mike Hughes, David Rallis, David Hulmes

Editorial
TEL: 0171-261 5737
FAX: 0171-261 7474
E-MAIL: world_soccer@ipc.co.uk

Advertising Keamus Setna
Production Manager Tom Jennings
Managing Director Andy McDuff
Publisher Sean Singleton

Display Advertising
TEL: 0171-261 5499

Classified Advertising
TEL: 0171-261 2823

Back Issues Department
TEL: 0181-503 0588

International licensing enquiries
00 44 (0)171-261 7715

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February 1999

LOYALTY is fast becoming a dirty word in football. Graham Kelly, a loyal if uninspiring servant of the Football Association, was a victim of Keith Wiseman's naive attempts to gain influence within FIFA. Steve McManaman looks set to leave Liverpool, who have nurtured him since he was a boy, on a free transfer that will make him an instant multi-millionaire. And sacked Ajax coach Morten Olsen has launched a parting shot at Frank and Ronald De Boer, who walked out on the Amsterdam club last summer in a bid to earn more money elsewhere.

No wonder Gabriel Batistuta is such a hero in Florence. The Argentina striker, who stuck with Fiorentina when they were relegated in 1993, spurned lucrative transfer offers from other clubs last summer. We speak to Batistuta on page 10 and analyse the reasons for Fiorentina's success in one of the most open Italian title races for years.

The Batistuta interview is one of a host of exclusives we plan to bring you over the coming months. From this issue, *World Soccer* will be appearing every four weeks, as opposed to every month. It's a small change, but one which we hope you'll appreciate. ***Gavin Hamilton, Editor***

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Asia is foolish to threaten a boycott of the 2002 World Cup

France 98 failure...South Korea's defeat by Mexico was typical of a poor World Cup for Asian teams

Four is too many

ASIA wants a World Cup featuring the best of all possible worlds – from the Asian point of view, that is.

Various members, led by those from the Gulf end of that huge football empire, are threatening to enforce an AFC-wide boycott of the 2002 finals unless FIFA increases its allocation of places to Asian nations to more than four.

If Asia does not appreciate FIFA's generosity then...tough luck. The truth is that Asia, judging by World Cup performances by its member nations, does not deserve even four places.

Those four are an improvement on 1998, when Asia had three guaranteed qualifying places and one to be earned through a play-off against Oceania's best (Australia). And what great achievements did Asia's four representatives manage in France?

– Saudi Arabia finished bottom of their group, drew one match (against fellow minnows South Africa), lost two and lost their administrative heads sufficiently to sack their coach (Carlos Alberto Parreira) in mid-event.

– South Korea finished bottom of their group, drew one match (against Belgium), lost two and lost their administrative heads sufficiently to sack their coach (Cha Bum-kun) in mid-event.

– Iran finished third in their group, beating the United States in a match whose passion had nothing to do with the World Cup. They lost their other two matches.

– Japan finished bottom of their group, losing all three matches (including that against fellow minnows Jamaica).

So Asia's balance at France 98 was: played 12 games, won one, drew two and lost nine, scoring seven goals and conceding 28.

AND THEY ARE COMPLAINING AT HAVING FOUR SLOTS IN 2002? THEY SHOULD BE ON THEIR KNEES AT THE THRONE OF KING SEPP, KISSING HIS FEET.

If the Asians do not want to play in the World Cup then they should, indeed, withdraw. Under those circumstances the hosting of the finals also should be withdrawn from Japan and South Korea.

After all, either Asia is in the 2002 World Cup or it is out. You can't have it both ways.

So Japan and South Korea have spent millions in bidding – much of it in competition with each other, which hardly reflected well on the confederation itself. Then the countries which want to impose the boycott should refund the Japanese and Koreans. After all, given the problems within the Tiger economies, Japan and Korea can hardly afford to write off such sums.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Saber, president of the Asian Olympic Council, believes the boycott threat a justified weapon in the battle for places. In that case, he can hardly complain if the majority of FIFA's membership decides that boycotting Asia might not be such a bad idea, either.

After all, there is no shortage of nations willing and eager to host the World Cup, is there?

● 2002 World Cup finals allocations:
AFRICA – five.
ASIA – four (two plus co-hosts South Korea and Japan).
CONCACAF – three.
EUROPE – 15 (14 plus holders France).
OCEANIA – none guaranteed (winners must play off against South American nation).
SOUTH AMERICA – four (fifth possible from play-off with Oceania winners).

Where there's a Will there's a way – but not for Wiseman

THE CLICHE says: 'Don't run before you can walk.' A pity nobody at the FA reminded Keith Wiseman of that simple truth. In rushing around at high speed, trying to force his way in through the executive door at UEFA and then FIFA, the FA chairman plunged to political suicide – and took chief executive Graham Kelly with him.

As one reporter outside Lancaster Gate murmured in the wake of Kelly's sudden departure: "It looks as if Graham has fallen on Wiseman's sword."

Wiseman, wanting to make an impression at the "highest levels", tried to go too far, too fast. His failure to gain election to the UEFA executive this past autumn was no great failure. Most ambitious candidates fail initially and it is through returning to the fray that they gain credibility and a reputation for persistence if nothing else. But Wiseman's FIFA bid was ridiculous.

The FIFA executive is made up of 24 members. Very few of them are held in such high regard as Scotland's David Will, who has been the vice-presidential nominee of the four British home associations since 1992. Will is no egotist. He is an effective team man as regards FIFA's legal affairs and, most notably, the referees' commission.

Wiseman does not hold a candle to him, and his very belief that he might effectively unseat Will said everything about a terrible – and ultimately humiliating – misjudgment.

Wiseman and Kelly negotiated a grant to the Football Association of Wales while simultaneously and coincidentally seeking Welsh support for Wiseman's anti-Will campaign. Northern Ireland had turned down a similar deal. Very sensible, too.

A pity Lancaster Gate did not appreciate that warning shot.

England's bid to host the 2006 World Cup has not been helped by the scandal. On the other hand, it has not suffered major damage either. Indeed, given the political turmoil surrounding Wiseman's term of office, it might even be argued that his departure will help, rather than hinder.

Humiliating misjudgment...Keith Wiseman

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And the money rolls in...

NEXT SEASON'S European champions will collect up to three times the prize-money on offer to Manchester United, Real Madrid, Juventus and the rest this term.

Madrid carried off around £10million after beating Juventus last May but, under UEFA's new Champions League format, winning will be worth between £25m and £35m.

The European governing body's executive, meeting in Lausanne rather than Jerusalem as had been planned, formally rubber-stamped proposals to expand the Champions League from 24 clubs to 32, and to intensify the qualifying rounds in July and August. It also confirmed that the Cup-winners Cup will be scrapped after this season and the UEFA Cup enlarged.

UEFA estimates Champions League income will double next season to around £260m. The 32 clubs in the group phase will each receive £500,000 per match. A win will earn a £165,000 bonus, with £85,000 for a draw.

The money will increase on a sliding scale through to the final. Grants will be made to countries whose clubs are eliminated early on.

General secretary Gerd Aigner ruled out any immediate role for pay-per-view TV. But a week being a long time in football politics, do not be surprised to hear whispers of pay-TV negotiations under way very shortly.

Weah back on track

GOOD to see that George Weah appears to be emerging from his rebellious shell at Milan.

It appeared out of character to find the former World Footballer of the Year grumbling earlier this season that he would rather sit in the stands than play wide on the left, where new coach Alberto Zaccheroni had sent him.

Weah has been a marvellous ambassador for the game – setting aside one racial abuse incident with Porto's Jorge Costa – and it was a surprise to find him whingeing like a big-headed new kid on the block.

Perhaps Weah's irritation reflected a realisation that, at 32, his top-level career is winding towards an end. Signs that even Weah had come to terms with the reality of events arrived with his late winner for Milan against Vicenza.

Zaccheroni was delighted and – clearly – relieved. "It's great to have Weah back on track," he said. "He's the kind of player who can make a big difference over the course of a long championship campaign."

Clearly Zac is among those who believe Fiorentina may not last the pace.

Revival...Milan striker George Weah

No sport, no Europe

JUST before Christmas, *The European* faded away. This weekly newspaper was one of Robert Maxwell's better ideas, but it never quite found its niche – veering wildly from lightweight popular paper to heavy business magazine.

Successive owners and editors all appeared to miss one salient point: that the single unifying bond across Europe at all financial, social and cultural levels is sport and, more specifically, soccer.

Was it mere coincidence that when *The European* finally folded, it was down to a mere two pages of sport?

Paying their respects...Real Sociedad players remember murdered fan Aitor Zabaleta

Ultras beyond the pale

THE death of a Real Sociedad fan in Madrid before the UEFA Cup third round return against Atletico had a major impact on Spanish football.

Hooligan violence – particularly that fomented by the right-wing Ultras groups – is no stranger to Spain. But the stabbing to death of Aitor Zabaleta shocked the game more than it might in, say, Italy or England.

Police made three arrests within a couple of days so at least justice may be done. Whether the sense of shock will linger remains to be seen.

Certainly, there was an immediate backlash the following weekend. The most emotional demonstration came before Real Madrid's game against Real Sociedad at Bernabeu stadium. A huge banner was hung from the stands, proclaiming: "Football says no to violence", and the players of both Reals walked out together, wearing black armbands, with each team carrying the other club's flag.

Once the minute's silence was over, of course, it was football business as usual with Madrid, the World and European champions, snatching a 3-2 victory.

*See page 30

'The Germans are always right about these things'

GERMANY have thrown a wonderful spanner into the Confederations Cup works.

You may recall the event had been set for Mexico in January but was then switched to the start of August, when France pulled out after European clubs refused to release players in protest at fixture crowding.

Arsenal risked losing Emmanuel Petit, Patrick Vieira and Nicolas Anelka while Chelsea would have missed Marcel Desailly and Frank Leboeuf at a crucial point in the season.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter extracted an undertaking from the French federation to compete in mid-summer so the tournament was put back. Clubs in France then complained the Cup cut across the start of next season.

Noel Le Graet, French League president, stepped up his opposition after UEFA decided to expand its club competitions. He said: "This must be the last straw. There is no possible way the French team can compete in any shape or form at the Confederations Cup. Let them play their tournament without us, if they must."

Arsenal, Chelsea and other clubs harbouring French stars – such as Inter (Youri Djorkaeff), Real Madrid (Christian Karembeu), Bayern Munich (Bixente Lizarazu) and Juventus (Zinedine Zidane and Didier Deschamps) would agree.

But the German federation saw it another way. Their season will not have started then, so DFB president Egidius Braun has offered to send the German national team to the Confederations Cup in place of the French.

That may appear odd, considering the imperious manner in which the Germans cold-shouldered the Confederations Cup two years ago. But now the stakes have been raised. Germany wants to host the 2006 World Cup and South Africa's prospects have been blighted by Morocco's vote-splitting arrival on the scene while England's image has not been helped by the Wiseman-Kelly scandal.

How better to curry favour with Sepp Blatter and the FIFA executive than to rescue FIFA's latest favourite project?

As Alex Ferguson said, in another context: "The Germans are always right about these things."

Zinedine Zidane is set to complete a hat-trick of individual accolades. Keir Radnedge reports

Heads above the rest...French World Cup-winner Zinedine Zidane

Zizou sweep

TWO DOWN, one to go. That's the awards countdown of France and Juventus hero Zinedine Zidane.

First he was voted World Player of the Year by you, our readers, for *World Soccer*. Then he was acclaimed European Footballer of the Year by Paris-based *France Football* magazine. At the end of January he will surely complete the hat-trick by walking away from a Barcelona gala night with the crown as FIFA World Footballer of the Year.

Intriguingly, though three other great French footballers had been hailed as European Footballer of the Year before Zidane's admission to that particular hall of fame, he may yet lay claim to being the greatest of them all.

Raymond Kopa collected his prize in 1958 from *France Football*, which inaugurated the poll, for inspiring *Les Bleus* to third place in the World Cup of that year. Michel Platini won a hat-trick of awards in the mid-1980s when he rivalled Diego Maradona as the finest footballer on Earth. Then Jean-Pierre Papin accepted a subsequently tarnished golden ball in exchange for the avalanche of goals he scored in the corrupted successes of Marseille.

But Zidane is different. Great as were Kopa and Platini in particular – Papin was a metaphorical and literal shooting star – neither of them can claim to have won the World Cup.

Zidane not only collected a prized winner's medal at the end of the 3-0 victory over Brazil in the tumult of the Stade de France last July, but he also scored two of the goals. He really did WIN the World Cup.

As much as Europe can offer a rags to riches story, this is it. Zidane's story is also one to inspire the hundreds of baffled, bemused and exploited footballing youngsters spirited out of Africa each year to feed the greed of the western European football machine.

For Zidane, born into comparative poverty in Marseille, is the son of Algerian immigrants. Hence his personal success at the World Cup was hailed not merely as a sporting but as a social triumph. Some commentators argued that Zidane's goals on July 12 did more than any politician to undermine the neo-fascist politics of Jean-Marie Le Pen.

Zidane, who is a level-headed diplomat and appears slightly comfortable with his superstar status, refutes any claim to political significance. "I am merely a footballer," he says with understated but genuine modesty.

"Let others read significance into what they like."

But Zidane knows the score. So do Kopa and Platini.

Kopa was the son of a poor Polish miner who came to France looking for work in the north-east around Lille between the wars; Platini is the grandson of Italians who crossed the Alps into France at around the same time.

They all wanted work and a better life and had to battle bigotry and discrimination to lay the foundations from which their football-star

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sweeps the board

children could rise to glory. Zidane's family arrived in France in the wave of North African immigration which followed the independence struggles of the late 1950s and early 1960s.

He grew up in the rough Marseille suburb of La Castellane, where he still has many friends and was first nicknamed 'Zizou'. The largest building in La Castellane is Olympique Marseille's Velodrome stadium but, oddly, Zidane escaped the attentions of the club on his doorstep, the club of his dreams.

Instead, he made his professional debut with Cannes and then moved on to Bordeaux with whom he reached the 1996 UEFA Cup Final. He was also on the losing side in two successive Champions League finals with Juventus, the so-called Old Lady of Turin, before his World Cup victory.

Zidane's temperament has thus been tempered by failure at the highest level as well as success.

For France, Zidane exploded into the national team arena when making his debut in August 1994, as a substitute against the Czech Republic. He scored two stunning goals in the final 10 minutes to rescue a 2-2 draw and his presence at the heart of the action has never been questioned since.

Not that he has lacked critics. Many suggested his potential was over-rated, particularly after a disappointing Euro 96. But critics of his low-key performance in England that year overlooked the debilitating effect of a full 12 months of football demanded by Bordeaux's progress from the previous year's Intertoto Cup plus the mental battering from a car crash.

One man had no doubts about Zidane's World Cup-winning potential, however: the then French national coach Aime Jacquet.

The daily sports newspaper *L'Equipe* pilloried Jacquet mercilessly for his insistence on putting teamwork above all else and ignoring the individualistic genius available in the likes of Eric Cantona and David Ginola. But Jacquet had the last laugh – thanks to one particular individual who now holds a medal way beyond the reaches of those other two.

Not that Zidane found the World Cup without its frustrations. He was sent off for uncharacteristically stamping on a Saudi Arabia defender in France's second match and endured the agonies of sitting, suspended, while his colleagues squeezed past Paraguay in the second round by virtue of Laurent Blanc's golden goal.

Jacquet consoled him by saying: "Zizou, the French team are not just you. But what I do know is that it's you who'll make us win."

Back against his adopted homeland of Italy, Zidane nervelessly converted the first penalty in France's shoot-out success. Semi-final victory over Croatia prepared the stage for Zidane's virtuoso match-winning display in the Final triumph over Brazil. Both his goals, unusually, were headers.

The fuss over Ronaldo's sad display may have stolen a little of the immediate gloss from Zidane's achievement. But the perspective of a few months has put all that right, as the result of the European Footballer of the Year poll proved.

Zidane collected 244 voting points, second-placed Davor Suker of Croatia 68 and Ronaldo 66. Later this month Zidane will also deprive the Brazilian of his FIFA World Player trophy.

If football were only about honours, he might as well retire then. After all, what more has the game to offer the 26-year-old who has won everything?

Zidane himself has the answer.

"I've got used to being a winner," he says, "and it's a great feeling. You want it to go on...and on...and on."

EUROPEAN FOOTBALLER OF THE YEAR: TOP 10

1 Zinedine Zidane (Fra, Juventus) *244 pts*
2 Davor Suker (Cro, Real Madrid) *68*
3 Ronaldo (Bra, Inter) *66*
4 Michael Owen (Eng, Liverpool) *51*
5 Rivaldo (Bra, Barcelona) *45*
6 Gabriel Batistuta (Arg, Fiorentina) *43*
7 Lilian Thuram (Fra, Parma) *36*
8= Dennis Bergkamp (Hol, Arsenal) *28*
8= Edgar Davids (Hol, Juventus) *28*
10 Marcel Desailly (Fra, Chelsea) *19*

Winner...Zidane receives the *Ballon d'Or*

HOW THEY LINE UP

Roa (2 votes, Mallorca); Thuram (4, Parma), Blanc (3, OM), Mazinho (3, Celta Vigo), Lizarazu (5, Bayern Munich); Beckham (4, Manchester Utd), Effenberg (3, Bayern Munich), Mihajlovic (4, Lazio), Raul (6, Real Madrid); Batistuta (7, Fiorentina), Totti (3, Roma).

HOW THEY VOTED

A BOLA (Por)
Kahn (Bayern); Brown (Man Utd), Hierro (Real Madrid), Kuffour (Bayern), Lizarazu (Bayern); Beckham (Man Utd), Scholes (Man Utd), Zidane (Juventus), Zahovic (Porto); Rebrov (Kyiv Dynamo), Raul (Real Madrid).

DON BALON (Spa)
Roa (Mallorca); Salgado (Celta Vigo), Blanc (Marseille), Thuram (Parma), Lizarazu (Bayern); Beckham (Man Utd), Effenberg (Bayern), Mazinho (Celta Vigo), Raul (Real Madrid); Batistuta (Fiorentina), Jardel (Porto).

FOOT (Bel)
Martyn (Leeds); Engonga (Mallorca), Stam (Man Utd), Blanc (Marseille), Salgado (Celta Vigo); Totti (Roma), Effenberg (Bayern), Savio (Real Madrid), Ginola (Tottenham); Batistuta (Fiorentina), Wiltord (Bordeaux).

FRANCE FOOTBALL
Dutruel (Celta Vigo); Torricelli (Fiorentina), Mihajlovic (Lazio), Campbell (Tottenham), Lizarazu (Bayern); Beckham (Man Utd), Mazinho (Celta Vigo), Keane (Man Utd), Ginola (Tottenham); Totti (Roma), Camara (Marseille).

GAZZETTA (Ita)
Pagliuca (Inter); Salgado (Celta Vigo), Blanc (Marseille), Leboeuf (Chelsea), Heinrich (Fiorentina); Keane (Man Utd), Veron (Parma), Jugovic (At. Madrid), Totti (Roma); Raul (Real Madrid), Batistuta (Fiorentina).

KICKER (Ger)
Pagliuca (Inter); Thuram (Parma), Sforza (Kaiserslautern), Campbell (Tottenham), Lizarazu (Bayern); Stroppa (Piacenza), Pavon (Bordeaux), Raul (Real Madrid), Roberto Carlos (Real Madrid); Batistuta (Fiorentina), Camara (Marseille).

SPORT (Swi)
Roa (Mallorca); Panucci (Real Madrid), Matthaus (Bayern), Marcelino (Mallorca), Maldini (Milan); Raul (Real Madrid), Effenberg (Bayern), Rui Costa (Fiorentina), Mihajlovic (Lazio); Batistuta (Fiorentina), Dublin (Aston Villa).

Vote-puller...Batistuta

VOETBAL INT (Hol)
Buffon (Parma); Thuram (Parma), Marcelino (Mallorca), Mihajlovic (Lazio), Lizarazu (Bayern); Mazinho (Celta Vigo), Beckham (Man Utd), Mostovoi (Celta Vigo), Leonardo (Milan); Van Nistelrooy (PSV), Batistuta (Fiorentina).

WORLD SOCCER
Illgner (Real Madrid); Thuram (Parma), Mihajlovic (Lazio), Sanchis (Real Madrid), Benarrivo (Parma); Seedorf (Real), Jugovic (At. Madrid), Kovacevic (Real Sociedad), Raul (Real Madrid); Batistuta (Fiorentina), Elber (Bayern).

EUROPEAN SPORTS MAGAZINES

Mark Gleeson on the new African club champions

At last, ASEC!

AFTER almost three decades of trying, ASEC Abidjan of Ivory Coast finally achieved their goal of winning the top club prize in Africa, the Champions League. They beat Dynamos of Zimbabwe 4-2 on aggregate in the Final, with all the goals coming in the second leg in front of a raucous crowd of some 50,000 at the Stade Felix Houphouet Boigny.

Occasional first-teamer Vassanogo Kamara turned out to be a trump card for Argentinian coach Oscar-Luis Fullone, who put him in for the second leg.

Kamara scored twice in the first 37 minutes to set ASEC on their way to a one-sided win. Donald-Olivier Sie, the seasoned Ivorian international who was one of the team members beaten in the 1995 Champions Cup Final, added a third before half-time with a delightful chip over substitute goalkeeper Gift Muzadzi. He had gone on for Ernest Chirambadare, who was carried off after clashing with Kamara in the mêlée that led to the opening goal.

Dynamos were further exposed in the 52nd minute when Nigerian international John Zaki made it 4-0, before the two consolation goals from Makwinji Soma-Phiri and Ghana-born substitute George Owusu.

ASEC had been on course for the Final right from the start of the Champions League in August and came through splendidly despite a small hiccup along the way.

The title, which came after four semi-final appearances, marked their 50th birthday celebrations and brought a massive windfall from the Ivorian government, who honoured the players with national medals and gave them around £70,000 cash to split among the squad.

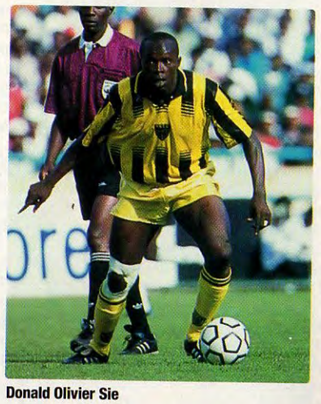
"ASEC have made West Africa proud," said Ivorian president Henri Konan Bedie, who led the celebrations of the former French colony's first Champions League title.

The team, who are financed by Ivorian businessman Roger Ouegnin, and have a French general manager, Jean-Marc Guillou, are one of the few clubs in Africa with their own youth academy.

Almost all of their players have come through the ranks, although they have been reinforced by imports from Congo, Nigeria and Burkina Faso.

ASEC's success came despite the sale of two promising strikers to Holland. Bonaventure Kalou went to Feyenoord and Burkinabe international Mamadou Zongo is now at Vitesse Arnhem.

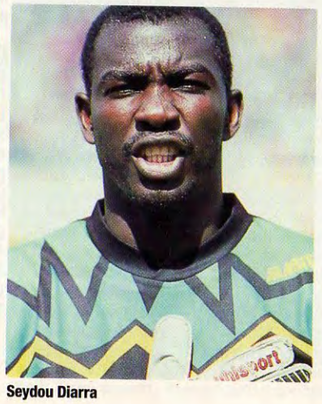
But Sie's return from the J.League in Japan and captain Tchiressoa Guel's decision not to take up an offer to join title-challenging Olympique Marseille n France until after the completion of the Champions League enhanced ASEC Abijan's chances.



Donald Olivier Sie

Siby Aliou Badra

THE WINNING TEAM



Seydou Diarra

COACH

Oscar-Luis Fullone
Argentina-born coach in his second spell at ASEC. He was coach from 1981 to 1984, when they reached the quarter-finals of the African Cup-winners Cup. Has also worked in Egypt and is now returning to South America.

GOALKEEPERS

Seydou Diarra
Born: 16.4.68. Second-choice goalkeeper who played in the Final after Losseni Konate was hurt in an earlier game. Has also played at full international levelfor Ivory Coast and won four championships with ASEC.

Losseni Konate
29.12.72. Ivorian international with much experience and brilliant reflexes. Injured in the Champions League Group B match against Manning Rangers of South Africa and had to watch the Final from the sidelines.

DEFENDERS

Ibrahima Diomande
28.10.69. Played for the Ivory Coast in last year's African Nations Cup finals in Burkina Faso, where they were knocked out at the quarter-final stage. Has won two championships since joining ASEC in 1996.

Guy-Marc Gaote
1.1.75. New arrival at ASEC in the 1998 season and a handy right-back who very quickly slotted into Fullone's tactical plans. Joined from Bassa.

Dominique Sam Abouo
26.12.73. Former international centre-back who was part of the Ivorian team who won the Nations Cup in 1992. After that he signed for Monaco but failed to make an impression on Arsene Wenger, and then went briefly to Saudi Arabia before rejoining ASEC.

Blaise Koffi Kouassi
2.2.74. Joined ASEC in 1997 from AS Divo and has gone on to win two successive championships. Also played in the 1998 Nations Cup finals.

MIDFIELDERS

Siby Badra Aliou
26.2.71. Scored seven goals in the Champions League and played a major role in winning the title. Started as a youth player with Stade Abidjan but was snapped up by ASEC six years ago, and has been part of five championship teams. The central midfield cog for ASEC and a full Ivory Coast international

Florent Baloki
10.10.71. Hails from Brazzaville and is a former national team captain of Congo. Moved to the Ivory Coast in 1993, signing for Sabe de Bouana and for ASEC the next year. Played in the 1995 African Champions Cup Final, which ASEC lost at home to South Africa's Orlando Pirates. A member of Congo's first 11 at the 1992 Nations Cup finals in Senegal.

Tchiressoa Guel
27.12.75. Was thrown in at the deep end as a teenager on his debut in the Champions Cup semi-final in November 1992 against Wydad Casablanca of Morocco. Twice Ivorian Footballer of the Year and the current national team captain. Has been to three Nations Cup finals and now bound for Marseille.

Donald-Olivier Sie
3.4.70. Brilliant winger with a deadly cross. Has been at ASEC since 1991 save for one season in the J.League where Arsene Wenger signed him for Nagoya Grampus Eight. Has now won the top two African titles, having also been a member of the Nations Cup-winning team in 1992 and now added a Champions League medal to his collection.

John Zaki

STRIKERS

John Zaki
10.7.73. Two caps for Nigeria (won in the 1995 US Cup in America) and hails from Makoudi. Has been at ASEC for four years and played in the losing Champions Cup team of 1995.

Maxime Gouamene
30.11.73. One of a rare breed of players who has played for both ASEC and the local enemies Africa Sports. Became something of a super sub for ASEC in the Champions League campaign. His nickname is 'Rui Barros', because of his similarity to the former Portuguese international.

Vassanogo Youssouf Kamara
10.8.81. Teenage striker who scored twice in the second leg of the Final to put ASEC on their way to a famous title.

A host of stars turned out to celebrate the centenary of the Italian FA last month when Italy took on a World XI in Rome's Olympic stadium. Parma striker Enrico Chiesa scored a hat-trick as Italy won 6-2. Lining up for the World XI were: Back row, (l-r): Zinedine Zidane (France), Fernando Hierro (Spain), Ze Roberto (Brazil), Gianluca Pagliuca (Italy), Rui Costa (Portugal), Ronaldo (Brazil). Front row (l-r): George Weah (Liberia), Carlos Dunga (Brazil), Gabriel Batistuta (Argentina), Aron Winter (Holland), David Nyathi (South Africa).

Roaring into the forties

With 41 goals in 40 games, young striker Ivan Kaviedes has made a roaring success of his debut season for Emelec in Ecuador. The total beat the country's previous single-season record, held by Argentinian Angel Liciardi, who scored 36 in 1975. Now Kaviedes seems destined to carry on hitting the net in his homeland – despite interest from several clubs in Europe. The striker is facing a paternity suit and until it is settled, he will have difficulties in leaving Ecuador.

Commercial break

Life imitated ad after Oviedo striker Dely Valdes scored at home against Real Madrid in their recent Spanish League game. As part of the celebration, the team masseur ran on to the pitch and handed Valdes a mobile phone so that he could imitate a famous Spanish TV commercial. "I didn't actually make a call," said the striker, "although I thought about calling my family in Panama."

Valdes is no stranger to bizarre ceremonies. Last season, as Oviedo's top scorer, he graciously accepted the trophy – a giant iron lobster.

Keeper finds two dead

Vicenza goalkeeper Pierluigi Brivio made a gruesome discovery when picking up his car to go training one morning last month. In another car at the communal garage where he parks were the corpses of a man and woman. Police said they suspected that the man had shot his lover, a 54-year-old hairdresser, and then turned the gun on himself. "When I saw the scene inside the car it was like being punched in the stomach," said Brivio.

Peter Neish

EURO DRAWS

QUARTER-FINALS

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE
Real Madrid v Kyiv Dynamo
Manchester United v Internazionale
Juventus v Olympiakos
Bayern Munich v Kaiserslautern
Ties to be played March 3 and 17

CUP-WINNERS CUP
Chelsea v Valerenga
Lokomotiv Moscow v Maccabi Haifa
Varteks v Mallorca
Lazio v Panionios
Ties to be played March 4 and 18

UEFA CUP
Marseille v Celta Vigo
Bologna v Lyon
Bordeaux v Parma
Atletico Madrid v Roma
Ties to be played March 2 and 16

Fiorentina's Argentinian ace and Serie A's top scorer talks to Dominique Antognoni

WORLD SOCCER: *Fiorentina coach Giovanni Trapattoni has convinced you to stay until 2003, so you must be happy with the club and coach?*
GABRIEL BATISTUTA: True. But it took Trapattoni's arrival here to convince me. He's a fantastic man, a real winner. He's got great charisma and when he talks about the game and his ideas you understand immediately what he wants. I rate him very highly as a man and as a coach.

But aren't you a winner, too?
I always want to win – even when I'm playing cards with my wife.

The strike partnership of Batistuta and Edmundo, according to the fans, is the

GABRIEL BATISTUTA – LIFE AND TIMES

Waiting to strike...Confederations Cup, 1992

Gabriel Batistuta

SUPERSTAR IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Loyalty bonus

best in the game. What is the secret of your success?
There's no secret, it's just that we weren't born yesterday – there are things we understand about the game and can put into practice together. It's taken us to the top of Serie A, though not all the media appreciate our success. Still, that's their problem if they want to talk and write about other clubs. The fact remains, no one is doing better than we are right now.

Are you angry at the lack of recognition?
No, I've grown used to it here. When I go out to play one of my aims is to upset the people who always write us off. The fact that we're not given enough credit just acts as an extra stimulus. I was furious, for example, after the game against Salernitana when I scored one of the finest goals of my career, with the outside of my right foot, and everyone – outside Florence, obviously – ignored it. It's no surprise to me that we're just considered temporary high-flyers this season.

So, how good is this Fiorentina side?
We are a strong team who are doing well because we have learned to believe in our ability and potential. Getting to the top of the table was not so hard – but staying there is the toughest challenge. It will take a lot of hard work. Not that this worries me. Trapattoni knows better than any other coach how to deal with this particular challenge. Anyway, I always thought – right from the very start of the season – that we would win the championship.

How would you describe yourself as a player?
Someone who never gives up the fight, who never tires of scoring goals and will never be satisfied with what he has achieved. For example, I never waste time thinking over the goals I have scored or the records I have set. What's important for me is the next goal I score, the next record. I always want to improve.

Yet you are the top scoring foreigner in Serie A, with more than 120 goals – and you scored in 11 games in a row in 1994-95. Don't you covet your records?
Records only serve one purpose – to get up your critics' noses.

Can you still get better as a player?
Of course. That's what I'm working at. For example, I need to improve my left-foot shot. I train with that in mind. But do not misunderstand me. Many forwards are selfish, egotists. But I have always deliberately chosen to work for my team – whether it's Fiorentina or Argentina. I don't mind who has the starring role, whether it's Toldo or Oliveira.

Do you think it's an unusual championship this season?
Why, just because Juventus aren't top? Have a look at the qualities of Roma, of Parma, of Fiorentina. You wouldn't say it was an 'unusual' championship then.

How did you feel about Fiorentina being expelled from the UEFA Cup?
An incredible injustice. Like being sent to prison for a crime you didn't commit.

You have been enquiring into your family history for citizenship reasons. What progress have you made?
It's going well. I've found a Domenico Batistuta – he became Domingo Batistuta in Argentina – who sailed to Argentina with his wife, Maria Zorzon. But all the documentation was sent on another ship, which sank. Anyway, in Argentina they had a son, Francisco, my grandfather, who had two sons of his own, Malchior and Osmar, my father. Hopefully, I'll soon get all the proper documents together.

Do you like the idea of becoming an Italian citizen one day?
To be honest, after eight years in this country, I feel Italian already.

Is it true that your son, Thiago, is looking a useful footballer?
Give him a chance, he's only six. But yes, I think he's got a talent for kicking a ball…

As far as playing for Argentina is concerned, do you think you will be playing in the 2002 World Cup finals?
I believe so. I'm pleased that Bielsa has taken over from Daniel Passarella, because Bielsa was my first coach when I started playing back in Argentina.

Looking back, how do you feel about France 98?
It was a pity we didn't have enough time to prepare properly. We had too many players based abroad, which meant we didn't have long enough to work together, to become a unit. As a team we didn't match the total qualities of the individual players – and that's why we only got as far as the quarter-finals. If we had had more time to get to know each other, as people as much as players, things would have been different.

Is it true that Michael Schumacher, the racing driver, is giving you flying lessons?
Yes, it's a wonderful diversion from football.

It's said that you don't really like football. Is that true?
Look, what I don't like is that football is run by people who have never kicked a football in their life, while we players are almost never allowed the chance.

Many thousands of youngsters idolise you. Do you have any message for them?
Play for enjoyment. Just think about playing, nothing else; not about millionaire contracts or fashionable clothes. Play and enjoy. That's what matters most.

February 1, 1969 Born in Avellaneda, Argentina.
1988 Makes his League debut for Newell's Old Boys.
1990 Moves from River Plate to Boca Juniors and establishes a prolific striking partnership with Diego Latorre as Boca win the Argentine national championship. Scores 13 goals in 29 League games.
June 1991 Makes his debut for Argentina, against Brazil.
Summer 1991 Moves to Fiorentina after scoring six times for Argentina as they win the Copa America in Chile.
May 1993 Fiorentina relegated from Serie A, but Batistuta guarantees himself hero status in Florence after deciding to stay with the club for the Serie B campaign.

Purple patch…early days at Fiorentina

May 1994 Fiorentina win promotion back to Serie A.
June 1994 A member of the Argentina squad at the World Cup finals in the USA. Enhances his reputation despite Argentina's early exit and the Maradona scandal.
Autumn 1994 Establishes a Serie A record by scoring in Fiorentina's first 11 matches of the season.
May 1, 1996 Scores twice as Fiorentina beat Atalanta 3-0 on aggregate to win the Italian Cup.
1996 A statue of Batistuta is erected outside Fiorentina's ground.
June-July 1998 Scores five goals as Argentina reach the quarter-finals of the World Cup. Spurns offers from Parma and Manchester United to stay at Fiorentina.

World stage…scoring at France 98

Trap on target

Giovanni Trapattoni believes another Serie A title is well within reach. Paddy Agnew reports

United response...the whole side is showing a determination to succeed

"THIS Fiorentina side begin to remind me of my Juventus, the one with Platini, Boniek and Paolo Rossi, a team with great individual players capable of winning the match for you at any moment. The fact is that we can't hide it any more, we're now in line to win this championship."

Giovanni Trapattoni was the speaker and the above words were spoken on the morning after Fiorentina had picked up their most significant win of the autumn, the 1-0 home defeat of champions Juventus which extended their lead to four points and left the Old Lady from Turin struggling 10 points behind them in ninth place.

It has been almost 30 years since the pride of Florence last picked up the Italian title but, on the evidence of the first third of the season, Fiorentina could be about to end the drought. In a post-World Cup season in which traditional big guns such as Juventus, Inter, Milan and Lazio have been waylaid by a combination of injuries, mental stress and physical exhaustion, Fiorentina have looked as sharp and enthusiastic as a set of kids at a Sunday kick-around.

It would seem, too, that Fiorentina have all the right Italian title-winning ingredients – a wealthy and politically connected boss, a vastly experienced and winning coach, a solid goalkeeper and defence, a hard-working midfield and a positively scintillating attack.

Furthermore, it could well be that by the end of the season, Fiorentina will have cause to be grateful for their seemingly harsh UEFA Cup ban (following the firework-throwing incident during their tie with Grasshopper).

Next March, when title rivals Juventus, Inter, Lazio, Roma and Parma are involved in European ties, Fiorentina will be enjoying a mid-week rest.

So far, such has been the quality of soccer played by the team that they have needed no "protection" whatsoever from their patron and boss, film tycoon Vittorio Cecchi Gori. However, in the real-politik world of Italian soccer (remember the controversial nature of last season's title win by Juventus), it does no harm to have a boss who not only owns two commercial TV stations (Telemontecarlo 1 and 2) and a large film production and distribution empire, but also happens to be a senator in the Partito Popolare Italiano (ex-Christian Democrat party), which forms part of the current governing centre-left coalition.

> "The fact is that we can't hide it any more, we're now in line to win this championship"

Nor does it harm Fiorentina's prospects that the coach who has won most titles in contemporary Italian soccer is currently sitting on the bench (Trapattoni won seven Italian championships between 1976 and 1989 – six with Juventus and one with Inter – as well as the Bundesliga title with Bayern Munich in 1997).

If you have to point to the moment at which Fiorentina emerged as championship challengers, then that came on the day last spring when Fiorentina announced Trapattoni's appointment.

The coach is 59, but his enthusiasm, vitality and vigour remain intact. He still shouts himself hoarse during a match, often reverting to his famous, shrill two-finger whistle to attract a player's attention. He still jumps up and down along the touchline like a man possessed, driven by his fiercely competitive instincts.

Arguably, however, Trapattoni made his greatest contribution to the Fiorentina cause even before a ball was kicked this season. It came last summer when he cornered Argentinian ace Gabriel Batistuta and wayward Brazilian Edmundo, persuading both that he meant business at Fiorentina and that, if they wanted to win the Italian title, they should stay right where they were.

After seven largely unsuccessful seasons with Fiorentina, Batistuta was understandably (and yet again) attracted by a move to a seemingly more solid championship contender such as Inter, Milan, Parma or Roma. After one controversial half-season with Fiorentina, during which he had played only nine League games, Edmundo was threatening to return to Brazil rather than risk sitting on the bench for much of the year.

Trapattoni told Edmundo that he would get his game and that, furthermore, he would get that game playing alongside the greatest centre-forward of the moment, one Batistuta. You soften them up, old son, and Gabriel will finish them off for you.

True to his promise, Trapattoni has based the attack of his winning Fiorentina team on Edmundo and Batistuta. True to their immense talents, Edmundo has consistently softened them up and Batistuta has finished them off, scoring 13 goals in the first 13 League games of the season and prompting Trapattoni to comment: "At the moment, Batistuta is the best striker in the world. Not even Ronaldo at his best is any better. You should see how much he puts into his training. He's always out in front of the group. In the dressing-room he manages to communicate his desire to win. He's a man of matchless pride."

Having persuaded both Batistuta and Edmundo to stay, Trapattoni's next clever move was to play Belgian international Luis Oliveira alongside them. This added another deadly talent up front but the coach also persuaded Oliveira to double up and help out wide on the right of a midfield that will always look lightweight because of the playmaking, attacking vocation of its resident central schemer, Portugal's Rui Costa.

As for the central spine of the side, Trapattoni was already well covered on arrival in Florence, with Italian international Sandro Cois in a defensive midfield role, a talented sweeper in Pasquale Padalino and an international-class goalkeeper in Francesco Toldo.

Despite the attacking potency of the current Fiorentina side, all of the great teams coached by Trapattoni over the years have been built from the back. Accordingly, he added three key elements to the squad – defender Moreno Torricelli (£4.2million from Juventus), Czech Republic defender Thomas Repka (£2.7m, Sparta Prague) and German midfielder Jorg Heinrich (£6.1m, Borussia Dortmund).

Repka is an immensely solid player, not without a competitive bite, as shown when he broke the nose of Juventus defender Mark Iuliano with his elbow during the above-mentioned clash. Torricelli on the right and Heinrich on the left add an attacking option to their sound defensive work, but both make an arguably bigger contribution by bringing with them the experience of playing in League and Champions League-winning sides.

Provided that the team escape serious injury, then the above ingredients are good enough to take the title. Injuries to key players, however, could be very costly. Fiorentina simply do not have the 24-25 man squad employed by such as Lazio, Inter and Milan.

Perhaps Fiorentina's biggest problems, however, will stem from the stress and pressures that inevitably will be created by the expectations of their notoriously enthusiastic supporters. At this early stage of the season, the fans are keeping relatively cool, but the longer the winning run lasts the more the pressure will mount.

Trapattoni, however, is convinced his men can learn to cope: "I've explained that to win a League you have to get used to driving at 360 kilometres per hour, all the time and no matter what the road conditions are."

Playmaker...Rui Costa

Loud and clear...Trapattoni's vocal volleys are getting the message across to his players

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The golden generation

Mark Gleeson reports on the latest bunch of Black Stars

Friendly fire...Ghana line up against Holland, October 1998

THIS is the start of a new era for Ghana, who are among Africa's strongest footballing nations and have a pedigree to back up that distinction. But while they share with Egypt the record of the most African Nations Cup victories – four – the last of them was back in 1982 and Ghana, despite winning world championships at junior level, have never managed to qualify for the World Cup finals.

Now the retirement of Abedi Pele, three-times African Footballer of the Year, and goal machine Tony Yeboah has opened the door for a new generation, under the coaching guile of former Italian international Guiseppe Dossena.

Racial and tribal tension in the team, with Abedi Pele and Yeboah as the chief protagonists and leaders of rival camps, has been a noose around Ghana's neck for the past decade. So have inconsistent team selection and a constant changing of coaches.

But Dossena has come in like a breath of fresh air and revamped the squad in only three matches.

Already there have been good results, including a first-ever home defeat for Cameroon in an African Nations Cup qualifying match and an away draw against the strong Dutch team in a friendly.

With the next Nations Cup finals in Zimbabwe less than a year away, Ghana are positioning themselves to make a serious challenge for a fifth title.

That new generation of talent, finally making the breakthrough from junior level, gives Dossena a strong pool from which to make his selections. In addition, there is the bonus of more Ghanaians beginning to show in the European leagues.

The new-look Black Stars are led by Charles Akunnor, a winger based in Germany with Wolfsburg, but are looking to Eric Addo and Peter Ofori-Quaye to lead them into the next millennium. Both teenagers have won their first caps and now play in title-winning teams in Europe. Ofori-Quaye can claim to be the youngest-ever million-dollar signing, moving to Olympiakos from Kalamata at 17. Addo cost Club Brugge nothing but has been a sensation in Belgium, which has a long tradition of African talent.

There are others with bright international futures, including Italian-based Stephen Appiah and Mohamed Gargo, both regular fixtures at Udinese.

Allied to all this is a healthy club scene at home, adding to Dossena's options. Obuasi Goldfields made it to the African Champions League final in 1997 and Accra's Hearts of Oak went within one goal of the 1998 final.

From these teams there are several players knocking on the door of national selection and posing a threat to the places held by those playing in Europe.

"I need to build my team and I cannot guess how long it will take," says the new coach. "Every coach has his own style of working. Some need just a few months to nurture a team, and others take longer."

Ghana should have a relatively smooth ride to the Nations Cup finals in Zimbabwe and then they can seriously set their sights on the next World Cup qualifying campaign. They were edged out by Morocco in their bid for a place in France 98, and had been hampered by tough draws in some previous qualifying tournaments.

But it is apparently becoming a question of now or never for Ghana. "We are going to embark on a gradual process of building – and if we all aim together at one goal then surely we will arrive at the promised land," is Dossena's biblically-inspired prognosis.

Rebuilding job...Giuseppe Dossena

THE COACH

Giuseppe DOSSENA
Born 05.05.58. This is a first major coaching assignment for the former Torino and Sampdoria player, who was a member of Italy's World Cup-winning squad in 1982 and gained 38 caps. Dossena also won the European Cup-winners Cup with Sampdoria in 1990. His coaching career previously had been with the junior teams at Roma and Lazio. He says of his new role: "To a large extent, everything depends on the players. I cannot deliver without their co-operation."

GOALKEEPERS

Richard KINGSTON
13.07.75. Sekerspor (Tur). 14 caps. The goalkeeping department never has been one of Ghana's strong points but Kingston is the current incumbent, now playing with Sekerspor after a season in the reserves at Galatasaray. Injured on his international debut against Brazil and lasted only 43 minutes before being replaced. Member of the squad at the last two African Nations Cup finals (1996, South Africa; 1998, Burkina Faso) but did not play.

Simon ADDO
11.12.74. Kalamata (Gre). 36 caps. Member of bronze medal team at Barcelona Olympics and part of Ghana's squad at last three African Nations Cup finals (1994, Tunisia, 1996, South Africa, 1998, Burkina Faso). Played at Ghapoha before moving to Kalamata in Greece. Elder brother Joseph is a former Ghana captain.

DEFENDERS

Eric ADDO
12.11.78. Club Brugge (Bel). 3 caps. Exciting defender who has helped his club to back-to-back League titles. Arrived in Belgium as a 16-year-old on the recommendation of a compatriot who played for city rivals Cercle Brugge. Was offered Belgian citizenship with an eye to playing for them in the World Cup finals in France but his parents were adamant that he opt for Ghana. Made his debut for the Black Stars at the African Nations Cup finals in Burkina Faso.

Patrick ALLOTEY
13.09.78. Feyenoord (Hol). 13 caps. Member of the Ghana under-17 team who won the world championships in Ecuador in 1995. Spent last season on loan at Excelsior in Holland before returning to Feyenoord. Has played for Ghana in midfield as well as at left-back.

Stephen BAIDOO
25.09.76. Ankaragucu (Tur). 25 caps (1 goal). Played at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics and the African Nations Cup finals in South Africa. Helped Goldfields to win the Ghanaian championship before moving to Turkey. Has played only two matches in the last two years for the Black Stars, but is now back in the coach's plans.

Mark EDUSEI
29.09.76. Lecce (Ita). 1 cap. Hails from Kumasi and played in Portugal for Uniao Leiria on loan from Italian club Lecce, where he has had little opportunity to feature. Helped Leiria win promotion at the end of last season. Only one cap, but was named in the recent squads.

Mohamed GARGO
19.06.75. Udinese (Ita). 15 caps (4 goals). Surprise inclusion in Ghana's 1992 Nations Cup squad and made his debut at the age of 16 years, six months and 27 days – the youngest player ever at the finals. He was a member of Ghana's under-17 world championship winning team in Italy in 1991, and was signed by Torino immediately after the tournament. But he did not manage to get a game in Serie A until 1996-97, after his move to Udinese.

Christian GYAN
02.11.78. Feyenoord (Hol). 2 caps. Made his debut as a substitute against Cameroon in Douala last October. Like clubmate Allotey he came out of the under-17 team who won the 1995 world championship in Ecuador.

Samuel Osei KUFFOUR
03.09.76. Bayern Munich (Ger). 29 caps (1 goal). First signed for Torino in Italy but was recruited by Bayern. He has helped them to win the Bundesliga title and has become a favourite with the fans. Kuffour is one of nine members of the 18-strong winning squad at the 1991 under-17 world championship who has gone on to play for Ghana at full international level.

MIDFIELDERS

Charles AKUNNOR
12.03.74. Wolfsburg (Ger). 35 caps (7 goals). Started his career at Okwahu United, where he was called 'CK'. Set-piece specialist, who has scored some vital goals for his country, and has been captain of the team since Abedi Pele's retirement. Now playing his first season in the Bundesliga after signing from Second Division Fortuna Koln in the summer break.

Samuel JOHNSON
25.07.73. Gaziantepspor (Tur). 31 caps (4 goals). Tough-tackling player who has bounced back after breaking a leg at the 1994 African Nations Cup finals in Tunisia. Left Accra's Hearts of Oak for Greece and then spent two seasons with Anderlecht in Belgium before moving on to Turkey. Italian club Perugia had been strong competitors for his signature but he elected to go to Gaziantepspor instead.

Bundesliga winner...Samuel Kuffour

Emmanuel DUAH
14.11.76. Uniao Leiria (Por). 14 caps (2 goals). Was dubbed an exciting prodigy when Ghana won the under-17 world championship in Italy in 1991, and was signed by Torino. But he did not live up to his promise and became something of a wandering minstrel, playing in Belgium, Turkey, Spain and South America before finding seemingly greater job security in Portugal.

Eben DUGBARTEY
31.07.73. Lorient (Fra). 1 cap. Won promotion to the French First Division with Lorient last season. Previously he had played in Switzerland, with Solothurn. Made his debut in the friendly international against Holland in Arnhem last October, at 25 – rather a late age for a Ghanaian.

Calling for the doctor...Samuel Johnson

Alex NYARKO
15.10.73. Lens (Fra). 5 caps (2 goals). Won bronze medal at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona but national team debut came last year just before the Nations Cup finals in Burkina Faso. Played in Switzerland for FC Basle before moving to Karlsruhe in Germany last year. While they were relegated, Nyarko got a lucky break – he joined French champions Lens and played in this year's UEFA Champions League as opposed to the Bundesliga Second Division.

Kennedy OHENE
28.03.73. Ankaragucu (Tur). 6 caps. Another Barcelona Olympic bronze medal winner who was signed by Ankaragucu last season from Saudi Arabian club Al Nasr. Scored five goals in 11 games in Turkey and now has found a regular place in the national squad as well.

FORWARDS

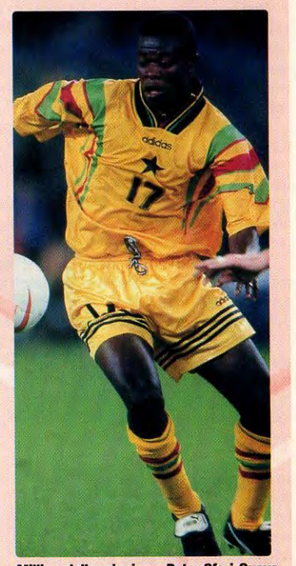
Augustine AHINFUL
30.11.74. Uniao Leiria (Por). 6 caps. Started his career as a youth player with Borussia Dortmund, the former European champions, but then moved to Grasshopper Zurich and this season joined three other Ghanaians at the newly-promoted Portuguese side Uniao Leiria.

Stephen APPIAH
24.12.80. Udinese (Ita). 4 caps. In his second year with Udinese and is beginning to make an impression in Serie A. Signed from Hearts of Oak as another part of what is a growing connection between Ghana and Italy. Played his first competitive match for the Black Stars in October, against Cameroon. His debut had come on his 16th birthday in 1996, against Benin in a friendly in Cotonou.

Kwame AYEW
28.12.73. Boavista (Por). 14 caps (2 goals). Younger brother of the legendary Abedi Pele Ayew. Like his brother, first came to prominence playing in Qatar in the Arabian Gulf, then moved to Lecce in Italy for two seasons, scoring seven Serie A goals. This is his fourth season in Portugal.

Peter OFORI-QUAYE
21.03.80. Olympiakos (Gre). 5 caps. Million-dollar signing for Greek champions Olympiakos last season and immediately helped them to win the Greek championship and a European Champions League place. Previously at Kalamata. Played for Ghana at last year's under-20 world championships and graduated to the Black Stars team just before the 1998 Nations Cup finals in Burkina Faso.

Yaw PREKO
08.09.74. Gaziantepspor (Tur). 15 caps (3 goals). Scored the only international hat-trick by a Ghanaian (v Niger in the Nations Cup qualifiers in 1994) in the past 10 years. Spent most of his career at Anderlecht before moving to Gaziantepspor last season. Preko had considerable success at under-17, under-20 and under-23 level, but was badly injured when playing in the 1996 African Nations Cup finals, and missed last year's finals in Burkina Faso after a fall-out with the federation.



Million-dollar signing...Peter Ofori-Quaye

Road to success

Nick Bidwell reports as the Rotterdam team take the away route towards the title

Fortress Feyenoord...but it is way from the De Kuip stadium that the Rotterdammers have sparkled

ROTTERDAM'S finest, Feyenoord (apologies, Sparta) are travelling first-class towards their first Dutch title since 1993.

Championship success usually is based on excellence at home, the creation of a backyard fortress. But the latest wearers of Feyenoord's red and white have not read the manual. They were six points clear at the top with Christmas coming up, and owed their position largely to a love of life on the road.

They began with a 2-1 victory at Fortuna Sittard, courtesy of a late winner from bustling back-up striker Henk Vos, and went on to make rousing awaydays a house speciality, with maximum points from visits to Utrecht (3-2), Heerenveen (1-0), PSV Eindhoven (2-1) and Sparta (also 2-1). Six games and 16 points – that record speaks for itself.

In contrast, a certain degree of carelessness has marked their home performances. In a goalless draw with Roda and in the only defeat in the first 15 games, 2-1 by AZ Alkmaar, Feyenoord were unconvincing.

The home game against NEC Nijmegen provided another example of Feyenoord's ability to misfire against supposedly inferior opposition. There was an abundance of possession but no cutting edge, and victory came only when a panic-striken defender hacked a free-kick past his own goalkeeper with time running out.

Not that the 25,000 Feije fans who turn up at De Kuip stadium every other week are likely to split hairs about their high-riding team, nor to lose much sleep over the first-round UEFA Cup exit against the Germans of Stuttgart. Nor the news that taxmen are scouring club records for possible transfer irregularities.

What matters above all else is that, for once, Feyenoord are outstripping deadly foes Ajax, who have won 10 championships in the past 25 years compared with the mere three that have gone to Rotterdam. Some might say that a merely efficient Feyenoord are only taking advantage of the dismal form shown so far by the other members of the Dutch Big Three, Ajax and PSV. But such a theory does the Rotterdammers an injustice.

Since Leo Beenhakker took over as coach, after Arie Haan was sacked in November 1997, he has pieced together a most accomplished side, one of no little flair and killer instinct, but one also true to those traditional Feyenoord values of honest toil and spirit.

Time and again, Beenhakker's team have displayed the resilience which all would-be champions need. The wins at Fortuna Sittard, Utrecht and Sparta were fashioned out of last-minute goals and Feyenoord came from behind to take the points against PSV.

Far from being weakened by the close-season sale of star midfielder Giovanni Van Bronckhorst to Rangers, Feyenoord have emerged very much in credit from the cut and thrust of the summer auctions, improving their squad with a quintet of talented arrivals. Each one has looked a shrewd buy.

Bert Konterman from Willem II has brought solidity to central defence, Patrick Paauwe from Fortuna Sittard is a fine prospect at either left-back or in midfield, and the Brazilian Tininho has switched with great effect from attack to wing-back.

Nor have renaissance men Jon Dahl Tomasson and Peter Van Vossen wasted any time relaunching their careers after disastrous moves overseas.

Tomasson, the young Dane who was branded a flop at Newcastle, is convalescing nicely in Rotterdam, occupying his pet position just behind the main strikers and showing plenty of the ability that made him a Euro boy wonder with Heerenveen. As for Van Vossen, the former Ajax and Anderlecht front-runner, he has proved one of the Dutch season's revelations. He seemed on the verge of being put out to pasture in the wake of a plague of injuries and mediocre form while in Turkey with Istanbulspor and in Scotland with Rangers. Now, back in Holland, he is doing so well that he has been called to the national team for the first time in four years.

The squad also includes such class acts as midfielder Jan-Paul Van Gastel (back after a six-week ban for elbowing an opponent), fast-improving striker Julio Cruz from Argentina, and the elusive Ivory Coast forward Bonaventure Kalou.

Van Vossen sums up by saying: "Feyenoord often have had to play second fiddle to Ajax and PSV, but I don't see any reason why we can't overtake them and dominate the game in Holland for a time. Everything here is geared to success – the stadium, the coaching staff, the massive support and, of course, the players.

"I firmly believe we have the quality players and strength in depth to maintain our lead in the table right to the end. For a club of Feyenoord's standing, second or third or fourth doesn't mean much. We're determined to put that right and put Feyenoord back on top."

Beenhakker certainly knows what is needed to finish first. He steered Ajax to the title in 1980 and 1990, and led Real Madrid to a hat-trick of crowns in the late 80s.

In more recent times he has had little success in a number of short-term appointments, which left many people doubting whether he was the right man to mastermind Feyenoord's return to the top.

Those who suggested that, at 57, he was more interested in pension rights than the title must be choking on their words right now.

Pointing the way forward...striker Bonaventure Kalou

TEAM FOCUS

History of success...Beenhakker

THE COACH

Leo BEENHAKKER
Born 02.08.42. Had no professional playing career to speak of, but developed into one of Holland's top coaches. Started in management with Cambuur and Go Ahead Eagles, before leading Ajax to the title in both his spells there (1980 and 1990) and taking Real Madrid to a hat-trick of championships (1987-88-89). He was caretaker-coach of Holland twice, and as a committed globetrotter he also has worked at Real Zaragoza, Grasshopper Zurich, Istanbulspor, Mexican clubs Guadalajara and America, plus the Saudi Arabian national team. Returned to Feyenoord, where he had been youth team coach 1976-78, in November 1997, from Vitesse Arnhem.

GOALKEEPERS

Jurek DUDEK (Squad No. 1) (Pol)
23.03.73. Polish keeper who did not immediately inspire confidence when replacing Chelsea-bound Ed de Goey at the start of last season, but the club stuck by him and he now looks considerably improved. One Poland cap. Signed from Sokol Tychy in 1996.

Edwin ZOETEBIER (21)
07.5.70. Was first choice at Volendam for seven years and joined Feyenoord last season after an unsuccessful spell in England, with Sunderland.

DEFENDERS

Henk FRASER (23)
07.07.66. Stylish central defender, mainstay of the back line for much of the 90s. Now on the fringe due to injury problems and the passing years. From Surinam, and has won half-a-dozen caps for Holland.

Ulrich VAN GOBBEL (22)
16.01.71. Another with Surinamese roots and a Dutch international (eight caps). Defender with lashings of power and commitment (sometimes too much). In his second spell, having rejoined the club early last season after playing for Galatasaray in Turkey and Southampton in England.

Ferry DE HAAN (20)
12.09.72. Bought in the summer from Rotterdam's third club, Excelsior, to provide defensive cover. Had been on the books as a youngster.

Bert KONTERMAN (16)
14.01.71. Started as a midfielder and was with PEC Zwolle, FC Zwolle and Cambuur before joining Willem II, where he switched to central defence with considerable success. A combative and reliable part of the Feyenoord back line since arriving last summer.

Kees VAN WONDEREN (8)
04.01.69. Like defensive partner Konterman, he is a former midfielder. A good reader of the game and composed on the ball, he has progressed so well of late that he made his international debut as a substitute against Ghana last autumn. Joined Feyenoord in 1996 following service with NEC Nijmegen and NAC Breda.

Powerhouse...Van Gastel

MIDFIELDERS

Paul BOSVELT (6)
26.3.70. Infamous for that horrific challenge on Manchester United's Denis Irwin in the Champions League, last season but he has a lot more to offer, such as bags of stamina, solid distribution and the ability to add his share of goals.

Jean-Paul VAN GASTEL (5)
28.4.72. A key man in the engine room. Always busy, hits a good long pass and can be very dangerous with free-kicks and shots from distance. Banned for six weeks following an elbowing offence on the first day of the season, but came back with two goals in a 3-2 win at Utrecht. Had five seasons at Willem II before moving to the Rotterdam club.

Well balanced...Argentina striker Julio Cruz has poise and good technique

Igor KORNEEV (18) (Rus)
04.09.67. Former Russia international playmaker but rarely an automatic starter since his arrival from Heerenveen 18 months ago. On his day, however, he has lots to offer. Previously played for CSKA Moscow, Espanyol and Barcelona.

Patrick PAAUWE (17)
27.12.75. Highly-capable midfielder or left-back who has shown up extremely well since moving from Fortuna Sittard in the close season. Technically above average, intelligent, with a strong shot from free-kicks. Touted as a future international.

Ronaldo TININHO Pereira de Freitas (13) (Bra)
23.10.77. Bought last summer from Portuguesa of Sao Paulo. Arrived with a reputation as a tricky left-footed attacker, only to be converted into a wing-back of considerable promise.

Jon Dahl TOMASSON (10) (Den)
29.8.76. After netting 32 goals for Heerenveen in two seasons, with a clutch of clubs knocking on his door, this young Dane moved to Newcastle at the start of last season, and sank without trace in a team on the slide. He also missed Denmark's World Cup squad, but now seems to have rediscovered his form in Holland.

FORWARDS

Julio Ricardo CRUZ (9) (Arg)
10.10.74. Argentinian striker with five caps, bought from River Plate 18 months ago. His first season in Feyenoord's colours was a success, with 14 goals in the championship and two that gave his team a wonderful win over Juventus in the Champions League. Scoring instincts, an impressive physique and good touch on the ball.

Bonaventure KALOU (7) (IvC)
12.01.78. Joined from top Ivory Coast club ASEC Abidjan last season, and his mazy dribbling and breathtaking range of skills have elevated him to the status of cult hero. Should soon be partnering Everton's Ibrahim Bakayoko in the national squad.

Back to his best...Van Vossen

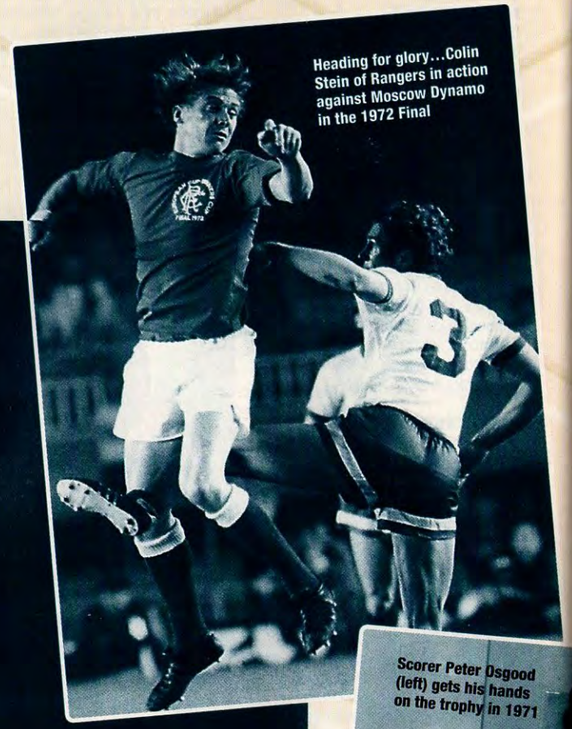
Robin NELISSE (24)
25.1.78. Rotterdam-born rookie who scored three goals in nine games last season. Bench material at the moment, but has a good future.

Henk VOS (11)
05.06.68. Tall, powerful attacker who loves to mix it physically and is particularly strong in the air. Made his name in Belgium, with Germinal Ekeren and Standard Liege, and went to play in France, with Sochaux, before joining Feyenoord in 1995-96. Now used mainly as cover for Van Vossen and Cruz.

Peter VAN VOSSEN (14)
21.04.68. He seemed at the point of no return after three largely anonymous years with Istanbulspor and Rangers. Move to Feyenoord provided a new lease of life – he has been recalled to the national team for the first time since 1995, scoring in the 2-0 win over Peru in October. Now has 21 caps. Previously played for Beveren and Anderlecht in Belgium, and for Feyenoord's great rivals, Ajax.

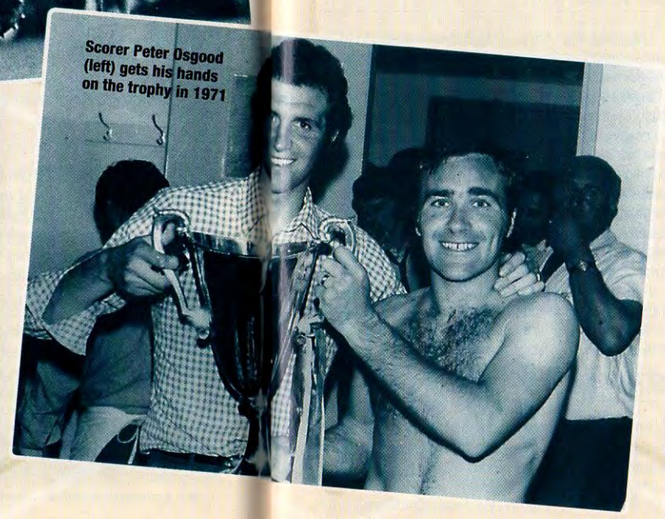
Goodbye to all that...

Keir Radnedge bids farewell to the European Cup-winners Cup – which will be scrapped at the end of this season in UEFA's redevelopment of the European club competitions



Heading for glory...Colin Stein of Rangers in action against Moscow Dynamo in the 1972 Final

Moore the merrier...West Ham's skipper celebrates the 1965 triumph



Scorer Peter Osgood (left) gets his hands on the trophy in 1971

THE British loved the European Cup-winners Cup right from the start. Not merely because the English and the Scots have held a special liking for the vagaries of knockout football but – to be honest – because the often dubious quality of the event meant they felt they had a better chance of winning it than anyone else.

That was true right from the outset. Rangers were finalists in the first competition, in 1961, and again in 1967 and, after little more than a decade in existence, the pot had been carried off by four English clubs – Tottenham, West Ham, Manchester City and Chelsea – with Liverpool once runners-up.

Yet the four home countries were not represented at the meeting which, on February 13, 1960, decided to launch the event.

The quorum featured 'only' Austria, Belgium, West Germany, France, Italy, Yugoslavia, Switzerland, Spain, Czechoslovakia and Hungary – which was hardly surprising because only half the federations in Europe organised domestic cup competitions that followed the traditional direct-elimination format.

If nothing else, at least the Cup-winners Cup galvanised every country in Europe into launching or raising the status of its own domestic event.

1960-61

Only 10 clubs entered the first Cup-winners Cup. The opening match was played in East Berlin on August 1, 1960, with the East German army team, Vorwarts, beating Red Star Brno of Czechoslovakia 2-1. The first goal was scored, after 42 minutes, by Kohle of Vorwarts. Brno, however, won the return, 10 days later, 2-0.

Rangers – still reeling from their 12-4 aggregate bludgeoning by Eintracht Frankfurt in the previous season's Champions Cup semi-finals – beat Ferencvaros. and went on to reach the Final, against Fiorentina.

This was the one and only Cup-winners Final played over two legs. Fiorentina won 2-0 and 2-1. Home-grown Luigi Milan scored twice at Ibrox, before he and Swedish goal-poacher Kurt Hamrin finished the job in Stadio Comunale. Alex Scott scored Rangers' consolation.

Fiorentina thus became the first Italian club to win a major European trophy, five months before Roma won the long-delayed 1961 Fairs Cup Final.

The 1960-61 tournament had been administered by a clubs' committee but its success prompted a formal takeover by UEFA. This, in turn, legitimised the event and 23 clubs entered the next competition.

1961-62

The first round contained one of the most remarkable ties in European history, between Swiss club La Chaux-de-Fonds and Leixoes of Portugal. Chaux-de-Fonds won 6-2 at home, then crashed 5-0 away.

Fiorentina, having been among nine clubs granted a bye, duly crushed Rapid Vienna in the second round, ZVL Zilina of Czechoslovakia – who? – and Ujpest Dozsa in the semi-finals. In the Final they met Atletico Madrid, whose victims had included Leicester City who qualified as losing Cup finalists the previous season, when Tottenham won the double.

There was a poor Final at Hampden Park, Glasgow, with Fiorentina and Atletico drawing 1-1 after extra time. When a replay eventually was organised – four months later in Stuttgart – Atletico won 3-0.

1962-63

This was the year when the Cup-winners Cup achieved merited prominence. Tottenham made football history by becoming the first British club to win a European trophy: not only that, they did so in flamboyant style.

But their thunder was stolen in the early stages by the Welsh non-League club Bangor City, holders of the Welsh Cup. Amazingly, they beat mighty Napoli 2-0 in the first leg and lost only 3-1 in the return. If the away goals rule had been operative, Bangor would have gone through. But it was not and Napoli won a play-off at Highbury by a mere 2-1.

Tottenham had reached the Champions Cup semi-finals the previous season before falling to Benfica. The experience stood them in good stead now, particularly in their 5-2, 3-2 win over Rangers in the second round.

Atletico Madrid, the holders, were waiting in the Final in Rotterdam. But they were no match for rampant Spurs, despite the absence of injured powerhouse Dave Mackay. Little left-winger Terry Dyson and the inevitable Jimmy Greaves each scored twice. The decisive goal was Dyson's first after 67 minutes. Atletico, 2-0 down at the interval, had pulled a goal back, but then Dyson, from way out on the left, lifted a swirling cross towards the Atletico goal. Madinbeytia misjudged the flight and the ball dropped over his head into the net. Spurs were 3-1 up and they never looked back, winning 5-1.

1963-64

The Cup-winners Cup was unlucky for Mackay the following season. When Spurs entered the second round, against English FA Cup winners Manchester United, Mackay broke a leg and, with substitutions not allowed at the time, the holders went out.

United were duly taken apart in the quarter-finals by Sporting Lisbon, who went on to beat MTK Budapest 1-0 in a replayed Final, after a 3-3 draw.

1964-65

The Cup-winners Cup provided Cardiff City with a seam of gold for many years – upsetting a few giants along the way. In 1964-65, for example, they put out holders Sporting Lisbon, and even won 2-1 in Lisbon.

The Final this year was one of the best in the competition's history, with West Ham beating TSV 1860 Munich 2-0 at Wembley – the middle success in skipper Bobby Moore's unique trophy hat-trick of FA Cup, Cup-winners Cup and World Cup. Two goals in three minutes from Alan Sealey did the job.

1965-66

Liverpool should have secured a third English victory but they lost in extra time to Borussia Dortmund at a near-deserted Hampden Park, which provided one of the first examples of live TV's effect on soccer gates.

Powerful left-winger Lothar Emmerich was Dortmund's hero with 14 goals in the tournament, still the Cup-winners Cup record. Emmerich, a World Cup runner-up against England later that year, scored six times in Borussia's 8-0 win over Floriana – another individual record which he shares with Levski Spartak's Milanov, who scored six against Lahden Reipas in 1976-77.

Liverpool had to wait until the 1970s before they could start collecting trophies in the UEFA Cup and Champions Cup. The Cup-winners Cup has eluded them.

1966-67

Germany again needed extra time to beat Britain. This time Bayern Munich were the winners and Rangers the losers, by 1-0, in what was virtually a home game for Bayern – in Nuremberg.

This was the season when play-offs were scrapped and a new rule was introduced, away goals counting double in the event of clubs finishing all-square on aggregate.

Bayern were laying the foundations for their Champions Cup takeover of the mid-1970s. Goalkeeper Sepp Maier, sweeper and skipper Franz Beckenbauer, midfielder Franz Roth and supreme goal-grabber Gerd Muller made up the backbone of the team. The 'home' advantage appeared lost on Bayern. It was settled, ultimately, not by Muller but midfielder Roth 11 minutes from the end of extra time.

1967-68

This season's event remains memorable for the tie between Cardiff City and Moscow Torpedo. Cardiff won 1-0 at Ninian Park but then, ridiculous as it now seems, had to travel some 3,000 miles to the heart of Soviet Asia for the return because Moscow grounds were frozen.

A goal from Gerskovich in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, sent the tie into extra time and earned, ultimately, a play-off in the more convenient location of Augsburg, West Germany. Cardiff's 1-0 win appeared an appropriate reward for their efforts.

Milan joined the list of winners with a 2-0 defeat of Hamburg in the Final.

1968-69

European club competitions were enveloped in controversy after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. A number of leading Western European clubs, under government pressure, demanded that UEFA scrap the original draw in the Champions Cup and Cup-winners Cup and make a new one which would keep NATO and Warsaw Pact clubs apart. The Eastern bloc withdrew in protest – all except Slovan Bratislava of Czechoslovakia who, ironically, duly carried off the Cup after beating favourites Barcelona in the Final.

Once again, as in the Champions Cup in 1961, Barcelona had gone to Switzerland for a European club final and come away empty-handed. Slovan Bratislava had made their sporting point.

1969-70

The Eastern bloc returned after their previous year's boycott as if nothing had happened. With the spell broken, holders Slovan were eliminated in the first round by Dinamo Zagreb.

Italy's challenge came from Roma, inspired by Fabio Capello, later the highly successful coach of Milan and Real Madrid. His goals helped Roma to the semi-finals, where they lost to Poland's Gornik on the toss of a coin.

Manchester City, flamboyantly managed by Joe Mercer and Malcolm Allison, were the other finalists, having beaten Bilbao of Spain 6-3 and Belgium's Lierse 8-0 on the way.

Just 7,968 braved the Viennese rain to see City collect their first, and only, European trophy, 2-1. Gornik remain the only Polish side to reach a European final.

City appeared on the brink of even greater things. This was their fourth major prize in three seasons after the championship in 1968, the FA Cup in 1969 and the League Cup in 1970. Strangely, their success went almost unnoticed in England where almost all attention that night WAS focused on Manchester – but on Old Trafford, where Chelsea were beating Leeds in an FA Cup Final replay.

1970-71

The victory over Leeds opened the European door once more for Chelsea – and they took full advantage in a campaign dominated by British clubs.

Cardiff City defeated Pezoporikos of Cyprus 8-0 and French Cup winners Nantes 7-2, before losing to Real Madrid. Aberdeen lost to the Hungarian army team Honved, in the first round, but made history as the first club beaten on the new-fangled penalty shoot-out.

Another stat: Lubanski of Gornik became the competition's top scorer for the second successive season – each time with eight goals.

In the semi-finals, Real Madrid beat PSV Eindhoven 0-0, 2-1 while Manchester City fell to Chelsea, 1-0 twice. The Final, in Athens, was Real Madrid's ninth in Europe – the previous eight having been in the Champions Cup – and they earned a second chance with a fluke goal in the closing minutes, after Peter Osgood had scored first for the Londoners.

Only the brilliance of goalkeeper Peter Bonetti held Madrid at bay in extra time and earned Chelsea's fans an extra two-day holiday in Greece before the replay in the Karaiskaki stadium.

This time Dempsey and Osgood scored in the first half, and those goals proved just enough to see Chelsea through after Fleitas pulled one back in the 75th minute to set up a tense climax.

Defeat was a poignant exit from the European stage for left-winger Francisco Gento, Madrid's last survivor from the great teams.

Eastern rising...Tamas Kastawa, Dynamo Tbilisi, 1981

1971-72

Rangers maintained Britain's grip on the event, but their victory over Moscow Dynamo – the only Russian club to have reached a European final – is remembered for all the wrong reasons.

The Final was staged in Barcelona's Camp Nou. The locals were not interested and the meagre attendance of 24,701 was dominated by Rangers fans, who enjoyed the sight of their favourites seizing a 3-0 lead by the 49th minute. Dynamo pulled two back but Rangers held on to win. Sadly, the final whistle was the signal for a battle between supporters and police. One fan died and hundreds were injured and/or arrested.

Chelsea had begun their Cup defence by swamping Luxembourg's Jeunesse Hautcharage 21-0, a record aggregate for any European tie. Osgood hit three in an 8-0 win in Luxembourg, five in the 13-0 victory at Stamford Bridge, and finished as the tournament's top scorer – even though he did not score again.

The Londoners were surprisingly beaten in the second round by Sweden's Atvidaberg, who drew 0-0 at home and then sneaked through on the away goals rule after drawing 1-1 in the second leg.

For the first time in a European competition, all rounds were decided on the away goals rule or on penalties. Play-offs were scrapped.

1972-73

The Cup-winners Cup generally has been a comparatively peaceful haven of the international club game apart from the Rangers riot in 1972 and, a year later, a controversial Final in which Milan ended British control by defeating Leeds in Salonika.

The Welsh heroics this season were provided not by Bangor or Cardiff but Wrexham, who defeated Zurich before losing on away goals to Hajduk Split from the former Yugoslavia. Hajduk also ended Scottish hopes when they beat Hibernian in the quarter-finals. British interest thus lay with Don Revie's awesome Leeds machine. They progressed relentlessly to the Final, but lost to the only goal, scored after only four minutes by Luciano Chiarugi.

Memories of his goal – his seventh of the campaign – have long since been overshadowed by those of the controversy over Greek referee Christos Michas.

The Italians hardly ventured out of their own half, blatantly wasting time. Yet, when Paul Reaney took his time over setting up a free-kick, Michas booked him. When Chiarugi and Yorath squared up, Michas turned his back. When Anquilletti pulled down Mick Jones in the penalty area, the referee waved away appeals.

In the 89th minute, Norman Hunter charged upfield, shrugged off two attempted fouls, was finally brought to a halt – and sent off.

Too late for Leeds, fate took a hand. Milan lost 5-3 to Verona the next weekend and Juventus pipped them to the League title by one point. As for Michas, he was later suspended by his own federation. Justice was thus done but belatedly. Too late for Leeds and too late for Revie, who left after the Salonika trip to take over as manager of England.

1973-74

Holders Milan had a nasty shock in store when they reached the Final again, this time against Magdeburg, the first East German club to reach a Euro final.

Only one British club reached the quarter-finals – Glentoran from Northern Ireland who scored 4-2 aggregate victories over Chimia Ramnicu Vilcea of Romania and Brann Bergen of Norway before losing both home and away against Borussia Monchengladbach.

The home leg was a sad day for Glentoran; centre-half Walker broke a leg and, that same night, midfielder Roy Stewart died of a heart attack.

Milan did not go to Rotterdam for the Final in the happiest frame of mind. Chiarugi, matchwinner the previous year, was suspended and assistant coach Giovanni Trapattoni had taken over as caretaker after the resignations of Nereo Rocco and Cesare Maldini.

Only 4,641 fans turned out – and they saw a major shock. Magdeburg deservedly won 2-0.

1974-75

Kyiv Dynamo were a class above most of Europe and beat Ferencvaros 3-0 in Basle with a mixture of skill, pace and tactical intelligence, which drew comparisons with the impact made by Moscow Dynamo in the 1940s.

Kyiv, having become the first Soviet club to land a European trophy, went on to collect a second – barely raising a sweat in defeating Bayern Munich to lift the European Supercup. But their prospects of achieving greater things were undermined by the Soviet federation which demanded Kyiv turn out, en bloc, as the national team in not only the World Cup qualifiers but also the Olympic Games. Even outstanding players such as midfield general Viktor Kolotov and striker Oleg Blokhin could not withstand the physical and mental pressures.

Ferencvaros had eliminated Liverpool, who had set a British club record in an earlier tie by having nine scorers in an 11-0 win over Stromsgodset of Norway.

1975-76

Anderlecht reached the Final three years in a row, largely due to their Dutch neighbours from whom they had acquired several players. The 1975-76 competition was far from a classic and Anderlecht were lucky to play the Final against West Ham in the Heysel stadium, which they often used as their home.

The two previous Cup-winners Finals had drawn barely 16,000 fans but 51,296 filled Heysel to celebrate a 4-2 win, the first European success for a Belgian club.

1976-77

Anderlecht reached the Final again, only to be beaten by Hamburg in Amsterdam.

Just when it mattered, cohesion and accuracy deserted the Belgians and they conceded two goals in the last 10 minutes. Georg Volkert scored the first from a penalty and Felix Magath claimed a second at the death.

In the semi-final, the Germans had lost 3-1 to Atletico Madrid, but scored three times in the first 27 minutes to take the second leg 3-0.

1977-78

Back bounced Anderlecht, entering the competition as losing Belgian Cup finalists, with Club Brugge having done the double.

English football had what was perceived as a redoubtable challenger in Manchester United but they very nearly did not make it past the first leg in the first round. Crowd trouble in Saint-Etienne led to United – who had drawn 1-1 – being banned then reinstated, and ordered to play the second leg 300 kilometres from Manchester. Their choice was Plymouth, where they won 2-0, but in the second round they crashed 4-0 to FC Porto and were unable to make up the leeway in the return, despite winning 5-2.

In the Final, Anderlecht faced FK Austria, whose greatest international club era was back in the Mitropa Cup days of the 1930s. The 1978 team had none of the power of their predecessors and lost 4-0.

1978-79

This produced one of the most exciting Finals, in which Barcelona defeated unfancied Fortuna Dusseldorf 4-3 in Basle, after extra time.

The teams were level at 2-2 at the end of both the first half and 90 minutes. Winger Rexach and Krankl

made it 4-2 then Seel pulled Dusseldorf close with a penalty to set up a frantic last six minutes.

Barcelona had eliminated holders Anderlecht on penalties in the second round, after losing 3-0 away, and beaten Ipswich on away goals.

1979-80

Arsenal made their debut in the event with a team built around Irish midfielder Liam Brady.

They reached the semi-finals with little trouble, but Juventus were a far tougher test. They even took the lead at Highbury and, though Tardelli was sent off and Bettega netted an own goal, held out for a 1-1 draw.

The return could not have come at a more challenging time for the Gunners who went to Turin in the middle of an FA Cup semi-final saga with Liverpool. Remarkably, they won 1-0, with a goal from youngster Paul Vaessen, who was then unknown to most English fans, let alone the Italians.

That was Arsenal's last celebration of the season. Liverpool left them trailing in the League, they lost 1-0 to West Ham in the FA Cup Final...and, four days later, fell to Valencia in the Cup-winners Cup Final, on penalties, in Brussels.

1980-81

Dynamo Tbilisi, the top club in Georgia and representing the Soviet Union, were surprise but worthy winners, coming from behind to beat Carl Zeiss Jena of East Germany.

Alexander Chivadze, David Kipiani and Ramaz Shengalia were the stars of a fine all-round combination.

Welsh club Newport County, later to lose their place in the Football League, went further that season than the holders, Valencia.

1981-82

Dynamo had the talent to go all the way again but, having reached the semi-finals, were surprisingly beaten by the down-to-earth commitment and discipline of Standard Liege. The Belgians won 1-0 at home and away with goals from Jos Daerden.

Tbilisi officials did not dare say so at the time, but privately they blamed the Soviet federation for having taken the national team (including six from Dynamo) to a lucrative friendly in Argentina the previous weekend.

Standard were far from happy at having to play Barcelona in the Final since UEFA had chosen Camp Nou as the venue. They hoped only that they might take advantage of unrest within the Catalan camp. Barcelona had just lost any hope of regaining the Spanish title after a 3-1 defeat by Real Madrid, coach Udo Lattek was under pressure, a question mark hung over the contract renewal of Danish star Allan Simonsen, midfielders Bernd Schuster and Victor were injured and defender Estella was suspended.

The Belgians went to Barcelona with an unbeaten record in the competition and having sewn up their own championship, but lost 2-1 after leading.

A poor match ended amid a flurry of cards and bad temper, with Standard's Walter Meeuws being sent off. Lattek became the first coach to bag all three European prizes after winning the Champions Cup (Bayern Munich) and the UEFA Cup (Borussia Monchengladbach).

1982-83

Spain could have held on to the Cup in the shape of Real Madrid, but a provincial Scottish club had other ideas. Aberdeen rose in the 1980s to challenge and overthrow, briefly, the traditional giants of the Scottish game, Rangers and Celtic. Optimistic observers of the time described Aberdeen's arrival as a revolution. Hindsight proved it to have been a brief insurrection – a talented generation of players under the command of an exceptional manager in Alex Ferguson.

Year of the underdog...Aberdeen's Willie Miller (foreground) celebrates the 1983 defeat of Real Madrid

Aberdeen won the League three times in six seasons, but were more a Cup team. They won the Scottish Cup three times in a row and five times in nine seasons. And, of course, they won the Cup-winners Cup.

The Final took place in streaming rain in Gothenburg, and was decided Aberdeen's way by John Hewitt's goal with eight minutes of extra time remaining. Madrid's old hero, Alfredo Di Stefano, merely shrugged his shoulders at the final whistle. He had guided Valencia to victory in the Cup-winners Cup in 1980 but repeating the trick as coach to Real, the club he inspired as a player, had proved beyond him.

1983-84

The profile of the Cup-winners Cup was never higher than in the early 1980s with the presence in successive Finals of Barcelona, Real Madrid and Juventus, the FIAT-owned club. They were embarking on a long period at the forefront of the European game, inspired on the pitch initially by the magical talents of Frenchman Michel Platini, Poland's Zbigniew Boniek and Italy's Paolo Rossi.

No wonder Legia of Poland, Paris Saint-Germain, Haka Valkeakosken and, in the semi-finals, Manchester United, found Juventus too good for them.

Much the same was true for FC Porto in the Final in Basle. Juve won 2-1 and coach Giovanni Trapattoni succeeded amid acclaim where he had succeeded, amid derision, with Milan back in Salonika, in 1973.

As for Platini, life just got better and better. A few weeks after winning the Cup-winners Cup he was scoring almost all the goals and captaining France to victory in the European Championship.

1984-85

By now, 14 seasons had passed since an English club had won a tournament which previously had appeared tailor-made for clubs brought up on the FA Cup's knockout tradition. Everton put that right, but, instead of being a new start, it was the end of an era.

Everton were a team without stars, though goalkeeper Neville Southall, midfielder Peter Reid and Scottish striker Andy Gray would prove enduring personalities within the British game – Gray, indirectly, through the medium of satellite television.

Everton looked good throughout the tournament and eventually beat Rapid Vienna 3-1 in Rotterdam. But two weeks later came the disaster of Heysel when hooligan followers of Everton's city neighbours, Liverpool, provoked the deaths of 39 Juventus fans before the Champions Cup Final in Brussels.

English clubs were withdrawn from Europe, then received a formal ban. Everton's reign was over almost before it had begun.

1985-86

Kyiv Dynamo returned to the Cup-winners Cup in triumph. A new team had been built around Oleg Blokhin, and it was just as stylish, technically gifted and impressive as Kyiv's 1975 winners. Once again they proved successful in the Final, 3-0.

Their victims this time were Atletico Madrid, whose Argentinian World Cup-winning goalkeeper, Ubaldo Fillol, was helpless against Alexander Zavarov and, in the closing minutes, Blokhin and Vadim Yevtushenko.

1986-87

Having won the Soviet championship, Kyiv moved up to the Champions Cup and left the lesser event wide open. Aberdeen were the only previous winners in the first round draw and they went no further, losing 4-2 on aggregate to Sion of Switzerland.

The big names in the event were Ajax and Benfica and, once the Portuguese had fallen to Bordeaux in the second round, Ajax, coached by former hero Johan Cruyff, were left in a league of their own.

They had few problems and should have beaten Lokomotive Leipzig by a wider margin than 1-0 in the Final in Athens. Marco Van Basten scored the decisive goal after 21 minutes.

1987-88

Ajax reached a second successive Final, but this time without Van Basten, sold to Milan within a month of the 1987 success, and without Cruyff, by now at Barcelona.

Bosman remained to lead the Ajax attack but without success in the Final against the unfancied Belgians of Mechelen (whom Bosman joined, ironically, just weeks after the game).

Danny Blind was sent off after only 16 minutes and Mechelen upset all the forecasts to win 1-0 with a goal from Pieter Den Boer...a Dutchman.

1988-89

Ajax had won in 1987, a Dutchman had won it for Mechelen in 1988 and a Dutchman was the winning coach in 1989 – Cruyff, with Barcelona. His reign at Camp Nou would last nine years and encompass a record four-year domination of the Spanish championship as well as bring the club the Champions Cup in 1992.

In the meantime, as a form of warm-up, they won the Cup-winners Cup in 1989, beating Sampdoria of Italy 2-0 in the Final, in Berne. Gary Lineker won his only European club medal in this game, albeit playing in an unfamiliar, wide-right role.

1989-90

Sampdoria's consolation in 1989 was to win the Italian Cup for a second successive year, bouncing straight back into the Cup-winners Cup and winning it.

Their opponents on a chilly, May evening in Gothenburg were former kings of the event, Anderlecht. The Belgians had collected the major scalp in defeating Barcelona in the second round. In the Final, however, they lost in extra time to two goals from Gianluca Vialli, later to be successful with Chelsea too.

1990-91

England's national team reached the semi-finals of the World Cup but the summer of 1990 was also an important one for English clubs. Lennart Johansson was voted in as president of UEFA and moved swiftly, in line with one of his campaign promises, to bring English clubs back into Europe.

The process was a gradual one, beginning with Manchester United in the 1990-91 Cup-winners Cup. If all went well, then the other competitions would open up to England.

All did, indeed, go well – so well, that United ended the season dancing in Rotterdam after winning the Final 2-1 against Barcelona – a dream of a night for Mark Hughes against his old club.

Barcelona had the tougher passage, beating Kyiv Dynamo and Juventus along the way. But in the Final, suspension robbed them of feisty midfielder Guillermo Amor and goalkeeper Andoni Zubizarreta. His deputy, Carlos Busquets, had never played a competitive first-team match before.

1991-92

This competition brought United down to earth – they crashed out in the second round to Atletico Madrid. Manager Alex Ferguson blamed UEFA's newly redrawn restrictions on foreign players which meant that, for English clubs in Europe, all Scots, Welsh and Irish players counted as foreigners.

The selection-juggling this demanded hindered English clubs' prospects for four years until the Bosman case drove a coach and horses through UEFA's restrictive practices.

In United's absence, the Cup-winners Cup field was wide open and Werder Bremen of Germany added a new name to the roll of honour when they defeated Monaco 2-0 in the Final before a meagre 15,000 in Lisbon's giant Stadio da Luz.

Klaus Allofs, a Cup-winners runner-up with Dusseldorf in 1979, collected a winner's medal after scoring the opening goal in a 2-0 victory.

1992-93

Yet another new name appeared on the Cup when Italy's rising power, Parma, owned and financed by the Parmalat dairy products corporation, took the cream.

Coach Nevio Scala took his team to Wembley for the final with one doubt, over unpredictable Colombian forward Faustino Asprilla. He had scored vital goals in early-round victories over Ujpest Dozsa, Sparta Prague and Atletico Madrid, but had then flown home and returned with a mysterious leg injury. Asprilla claimed he was fit and had earned the right to play.

Scala disagreed but, even without Asprilla, Parma had far too much firepower for their willing but limited opponents from Antwerp, winning 3-1.

Chelsea's Italian job…Vialli (left) and Zola celebrate in 1998

1993-94

The spectators at the 1992 Final had included Arsenal manager George Graham, a keen student of the international game. The lessons he had learned were put into practice with the greatest success on Arsenal's behalf in the Cup-winners Cup in 1993-94, a vintage year with contestants also including holders Parma, Real Madrid, Ajax, Benfica and Paris Saint-Germain.

No club had yet retained the trophy, but Parma believed they could break the jinx and might have done so had Sweden's Tomas Brolin taken advantage of two gilt-edged opportunities in the first 15 minutes of the Final.

In fact, four minutes later, Arsenal were in charge, Alan Smith scoring the only goal.

1994-95

Football has a habit of upsetting the best-laid plans and Arsenal's defence of the Cup-winners Cup proved the point. Just like Parma the previous season, they fought their way back to the Final. Then, just like Parma, they blew it.

Ironically, this Cup-winners Cup did not contain anything like the same quality of potential opposition. Ian Wright was the individual star with a stack of goals and England goalkeeper David Seaman then took on the hero's mantle with some shoot-out saves.

But Seaman's unhappy 'reward' for semi-final heroics was to be the scapegoat in the Final against Spain's barely rated Zaragoza in Paris, when he was beaten by a remarkable last-minute, 50-yard shot from Nayim which gave Zaragoza a 2-1 victory.

Rubbing salt into the wound, Nayim had previously played for Tottenham Hotspur – Arsenal's fierce North London rivals.

1995-96

Like Parma, like Arsenal…Zaragoza also failed the title defence challenge. They lost to their fellow Spaniards from Deportivo La Coruna in the quarter-finals.

One round later and La Coruna duly succumbed to Paris Saint-Germain, who went on to beat Rapid Vienna 1-0 in a Final more one-sided than the score indicates.

The venue was the redeveloped King Baudouin (formerly Heysel) stadium in Brussels.

1996-97

Paris Saint-Germain went close to breaking the holders' hoodoo. They duly reached the Final and were not without support.

But they lost 1-0 to Bobby Robson's Barcelona in the same De Kuip stadium in Rotterdam where the Catalans had fallen to Manchester United in 1991.

1997-98

Under the traditional rules, Barcelona should have defended the Cup. The fact that they did not held great significance for the status and image of the event.

This was the season in which UEFA allowed the runners-up of Europe's top eight nations into the Champions League. The decision meant an inevitable slip in quality. Indeed, UEFA accepted the likely inevitable by ruling that, where both domestic cup finalists had qualified for the Champions League, a country would be expected to stage a play-off between the losing semi-finalists to find a representative for the Cup-winners Cup.

All the pessimistic comments about the future of the competition appeared justified by the entry for 1997-98. Chelsea – managed in idiosyncratic style by Ruud Gullit before he was replaced by Gianluca Vialli – were the obvious favourites in a field which hardly sparkled, and duly beat Stuttgart with a goal by Gianfranco Zola, after only 23 seconds on the pitch as a second-half substitute.

An estimated 20,000 singing, flag-waving and cheering Chelsea fans celebrated long into the Stockholm night. For the Cup-winners Cup, though, it was the beginning of the end.

● Abridged from *The Complete Encyclopedia of Football*, by Keir Radnedge (Carlton Books, £29.95).

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Who qualifies for the expanded Champions League and UEFA Cup next season

1999-2000 UEFA Champions League

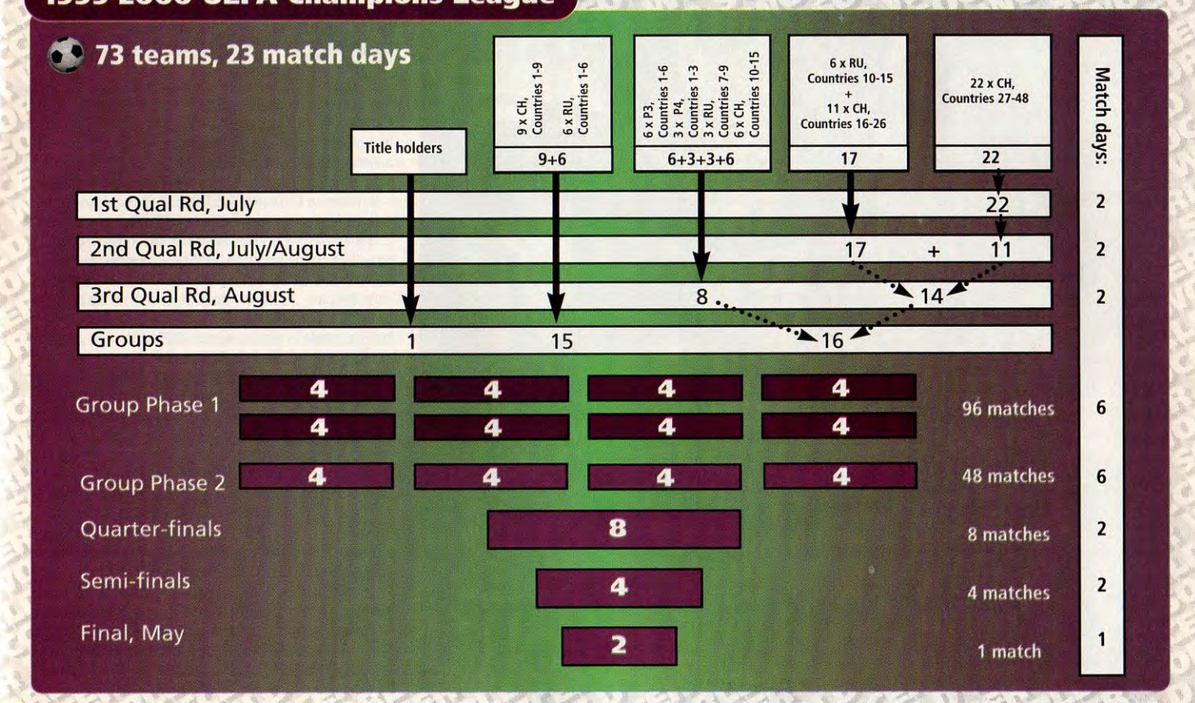
Rank	Country	Group phase			3rd qual rd				2nd qual rd		1st qual rd
		TH									
1	Italy		CH	RU			P3	P4			
2	Germany		CH	RU			P3	P4			
3	Spain		CH	RU			P3	P4			
4	France		CH	RU			P3				
5	Holland		CH	RU			P3				
6	England		CH	RU			P3				
7	Portugal		CH			RU					
8	Greece		CH			RU					
9	Czech Rep		CH			RU					
10	Norway				CH					RU	
11	Austria				CH					RU	
12	Russia				CH					RU	
13	Croatia				CH					RU	
14	Turkey				CH					RU	
15	Denmark				CH					RU	
16	Switzerland								CH		
17	Ukraine								CH		
18	Poland								CH		
19	Hungary								CH		
20	Belgium								CH		
21	Slovakia								CH		
22	Romania								CH		
23	Sweden								CH		
24	Georgia								CH		
25	Cyprus								CH		
26	Scotland								CH		
27	Israel										CH
28	Slovenia										CH
29	Belarus										CH
30	Iceland										CH
31	Finland										CH
32	Latvia										CH
33	Bulgaria										CH
34	FYR Macedonia										CH
35	Lithuania										CH
36	Yugoslavia										CH
37	Moldova										CH
38	Estonia										CH
39	Armenia										CH
40	Northern Ireland										CH
41	Malta										CH
42	Wales										CH
43	Rep. Ireland										CH
44	Faroe Islands										CH
45	Albania										CH
46	Luxembourg										CH
47	Azerbaijan										CH
48	Bosnia-Herzegovina									CH	
TOTAL		1	9	6	6	3	6	3	11	6	22
			16			18			17		22

KEY: TH = Title holders; CH = Champions; RU = Runners-up; P3 = 3rd-placed in domestic league; P4 = 4th-placed; P5 = 5th-placed; P6 = 6th-placed. CW = Cup-winners.

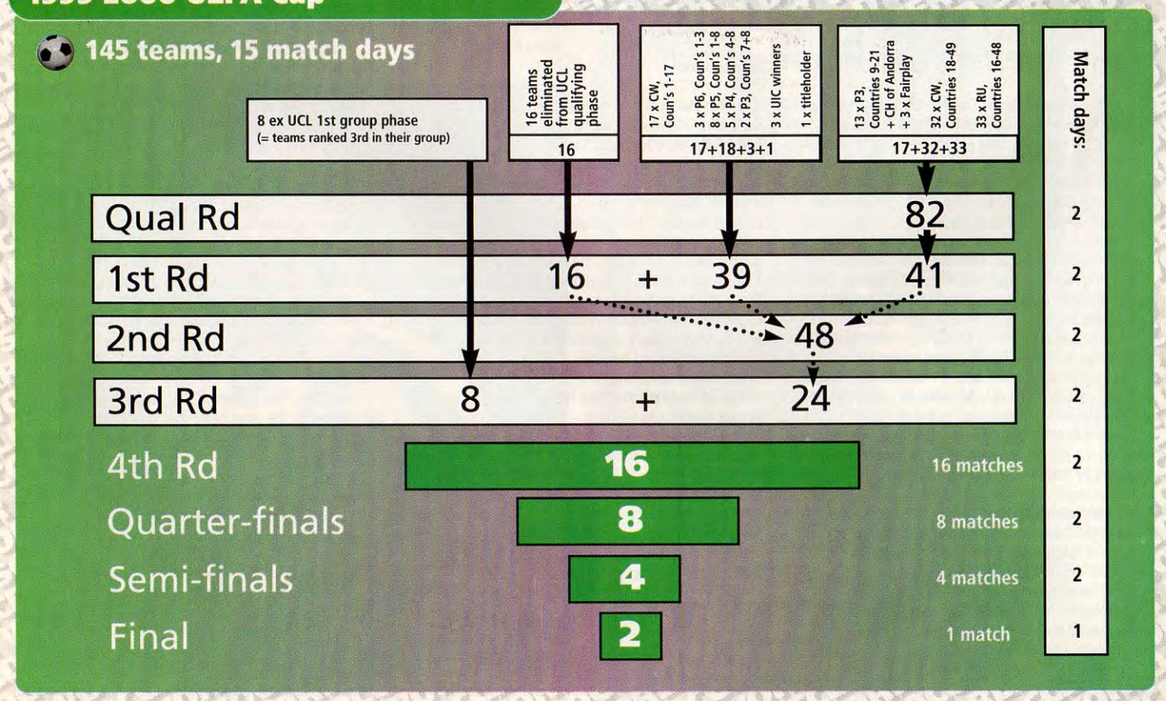
1999-2000 UEFA Cup

Rank	Country	1st rd							Qual rd				
		TH											
1	Italy		CW			P5	P6						
2	Germany		CW			P5	P6						
3	Spain		CW			P5	P6						
4	France		CW		P4	P5							
5	Holland		CW		P4	P5							
6	England		CW		P4	P5							
7	Portugal		CW	P3	P4	P5							
8	Greece		CW	P3	P4	P5							
9	Czech Rep		CW										P3
10	Norway		CW										P3
11	Austria		CW										P3
12	Russia		CW										P3
13	Croatia		CW										P3
14	Turkey		CW										P3
15	Denmark		CW										P3
16	Switzerland		CW									RU	P3
17	Ukraine		CW									RU	P3
18	Poland										CW	RU	P3
19	Hungary										CW	RU	P3
20	Belgium										CW	RU	P3
21	Slovakia										CW	RU	P3
22	Romania										CW	RU	
23	Sweden										CW	RU	
24	Georgia										CW	RU	
25	Cyprus										CW	RU	
26	Scotland										CW	RU	
27	Israel										CW	RU	
28	Slovenia										CW	RU	
29	Belarus										CW	RU	
30	Iceland										CW	RU	
31	Finland										CW	RU	
32	Latvia										CW	RU	
33	Bulgaria										CW	RU	
34	FYR Macedonia										CW	RU	
35	Lithuania										CW	RU	
36	Yugoslavia										CW	RU	
37	Moldova										CW	RU	
38	Liechtenstein										CW		
39	Estonia										CW	RU	
40	Armenia										CW	RU	
41	Northern Ireland										CW	RU	
42	Malta										CW	RU	
43	Wales										CW	RU	
44	Rep. Ireland										CW	RU	
45	Faroe Islands										CW	RU	
46	Albania										CW	RU	
47	Luxembourg										CW	RU	
48	Azerbaijan										CW	RU	
49	Bosnia-Herzegovina										CW	RU	
50	Andorra									CH			
UEFA InterToto Cup								3					
Fair Play									3				
TOTAL		1	17	2	5	8	3	3	3	1	32	33	13
					39					82			

1999-2000 UEFA Champions League



1999-2000 UEFA Cup



Taking charge in Genoa...Platt on his first day as Sampdoria's 'technical director'

Gentleman David starts at the top

Paddy Agnew on Sampdoria's new coach

IT WAS Golden Oldie time as the calendar year wound to a close in Italy with illustrious names such as Roberto Baggio, Roberto Mancini and David Platt all stealing the Serie A headlines, all three putting their experience and talent to good use in setting up their respective clubs, Internazionale, Lazio and Sampdoria, for a potentially prosperous 1999.

Platt sprang the biggest surprise when Sampdoria announced that they had welcomed him back into "the Sampdoria family" in the week before Christmas.

The first official announcement of Platt's return to the club where he had played out two very successful seasons between 1993 and 1995 carefully avoided specifying his job title, and for good reason too.

Although the 62 times-capped midfielder and former England captain is still only 32 years old, Sampdoria did not engage him as a player but rather as coach in succession to ex-Empoli coach Luciano Spalletti, who received the old heave-ho following Sampdoria's 5-2 drubbing by Lazio (and Mancini) on December 13.

It says much about the high esteem in which Platt is held by his former club that he had been third on their shopping list after the former Parma and Borussia Dortmund coach Nevio Scala and the Argentina coach at France 98, Daniel Passarella.

Scala failed to agree terms (and money) with Sampdoria, while Passarella was reportedly not much interested, leaving the way open for the unexpected appointment of Platt. In truth, no other prestige Serie A side would have dared consider a coach of such limited experience.

Since retiring from soccer last summer, after a highly successful 14-season career with Crewe Alexandra, Aston Villa, Bari, Juventus, Sampdoria and Arsenal (where he played a minor part in securing last season's League and FA Cup double), Platt had been launched on a self-appointed coaching apprenticeship, bringing to his new career all the intelligence, industry and sheer political savvy that enabled him to make the most of his playing talents, on and off the field.

In recent months, he had combined a job as assistant coach to FA technical adviser Howard Wilkinson with coaching 13-year-olds at Watford, while also finding time to spend a work study week with Dutchman and Ajax Amsterdam old boy Louis Van Gaal, currently coach to the mighty Barcelona.

During those months, too, he had reportedly declined at least two managerial jobs – at Sheffield United and Wolverhampton Wanderers – suggesting that the offers had come too early for him and adding that he wanted "to be fully prepared" for the "incredibly demanding" task of management.

The Sampdoria job is different, however. Platt may not be "fully prepared" for it but he knows only too well that it represents a rare chance to start his managerial career at the very top of the heap.

No sooner had his appointment been announced, however, than it became apparent that not everyone enthused about the idea.

Azeglio Vicini, the man who coached Italy during the 1990 World Cup, these days has a dual role as president of the Italian coaches' association and vice-president of the Italian federation's technical section at Coverciano in Florence. Although a former Sampdoria player, Vicini was furious with his ex-club for attempting to appoint as coach someone who did not have the 'category one' coach's licence necessary to sit on a Serie A bench. "As things stand, Platt doesn't have the qualifications to coach even a reserve team," thundered Vicini.

Sampdoria, however, had been all too aware of the problem and thus appointed, along with Platt, 59-year-old Giorgio Veneri, a man with the correct licence but someone who, until now, has coached only at Serie C (Third Division) level with international household names such as Leffe and Prato.

It takes no Einstein to work out the Sampdoria 'wheeze'.

Veneri has the licence, he will be the 'official' coach, he will sit on the bench on Sunday afternoons, but it will be Platt who calls the shots.

In the past, a similar arrangement was set up to allow Englishman Roy Hodgson to coach at Internazionale in the autumn of 1995. Although vastly experienced and a former Swiss national team coach, Hodgson did not have a 'category one' licence, so a compromise was found enabling him to go by the title of 'technical director' while Giovanni Ardemagni held the necessary permit.

Platt's lack of experience, however, makes such a compromise all the more difficult and the club will need to call on all the seasonal goodwill going to ensure that both they and their man, currently called 'team supervisor', do not get fined or indeed totally blocked as being in breach of Federation Article 1 calling for Fairness and Honesty.

In order not to further annoy the authorities, Platt watched his first game 'in charge', a 2-2 home draw with Milan, from the grandstand. That game ought to have confirmed his earlier impression, namely that this Sampdoria side are performing way below their potential.

Sampdoria may currently lie uncomfortably close to the relegation zone, but their dismal season so far owes much to the injuries that have deprived them of strikers Vicenzo Montella (42 goals in the last two seasons) and ex-Red Star Belgrade player Zoran Jovicic.

That poor start, too, probably owes even more to the fact that such as Argentinian Juan Veron (sold to Parma for £13milllion), Frenchman Alain Boghossian (also Parma, £3.5m) and Yugoslav Sinisa Mihajlovic (Lazio, £8.5m) have not been adequately replaced.

In recent seasons, Sampdoria have maximised limited resources, regularly qualifying for European competition but failing to put in a serious title challenge since the heady days of the early 1990s, when a Gianluca Vialli-Roberto Mancini powered team won both the Italian League (1991) and the Cup-winners Cup (1990).

The need to balance the books, to buy cheaply and sell well (e.g. Veron) has dictated this policy.

At the moment, however, the club seem willing to spend. It is not for nothing that Platt's arrival coincides with reports that a deal has been concluded for the purchase of Argentinian Marcelo Delgado of Racing Avelleneda.

Inevitably, Platt's path to the Sampdoria job has been smoothed by the good impression left behind him during four seasons in Serie A with Bari, Juventus and Sampdoria.

Not only the Sampdoria 'family' but also soccer commentators recall him as something 'exotic', namely an English footballer who, rather than belch into microphones and fail to learn Italian, proved himself courteous, intelligent and articulate (in Italian) off the pitch, while distinctly useful on it.

Sports daily *Gazzetta Dello Sport* explained his appointment, saying: "Platt, in the end, has the attraction of the exotic. He knows Genoa like his own pocket, he speaks Italian like a Florentine and he is a friend of the Mantovani family, and, what's more, he knows his football."

Veterans still setting the pace

WHILE Platt and Sampdoria roll up their sleeves for the long haul back to the top, last season's UEFA Cup finalists, Lazio and Inter, served a timely, end-of-year warning with performances which suggested that they have left behind them their post-World Cup problems.

A 3-3 derby draw with Roma followed by consecutive wins against Juventus, Sampdoria and Udinese, plus qualification for the quarter-finals of the Cup-winners Cup, indicated that Lazio were recovering, doing so even before such as Christian Vieri, Croat Alen Boksic and Czech Pavel Nedved had recovered from injury.

Critical to the Lazio recovery was the comeback of central defender Alessandro Nesta, whose overall solidity and class shored up a defence that had looked on the distinctly leaky side for most of the autumn.

Perhaps even more important for the Rome team, though, was 34-year-old Roberto Mancini who, in the words of his coach, Sven Goran Eriksson, wants to give up soccer every Monday morning but has usually changed his mind by the following Saturday evening.

With all around him going down with injuries, Mancini has been the inspiration of the Lazio revival, scoring and setting up goals that owe much to his astonishing technique.

Even when Vieri, Boksic et al are fit, Mancini is likely to be the first name on Eriksson's team sheet.

If Lazio ended the year on a good note, Inter went out with a bang – a 4-1 demolition of Roma, a side until then widely considered the most 'in-form' of the entire championship. At the heart of demolition operations was 31-year-old Roberto Baggio, brought on as a 54th minute substitute at a time when his side were losing 1-0.

The Little Prince gave one of the greatest performances of his illustrious career, creating two goals, scoring one, hitting a post from a free-kick and also seeing Roma defender Fabio Petruzzi sent off for bringing him down.

From the viewpoint of Inter's future opponents such as Manchester United (Champions League quarter-final tie), the worrying aspect of the performance against Roma was that it suggested that not only was Baggio just about the most talented Italian inside-forward still around, but that the 'boy' Ronaldo was finally on his way back to his best form.

Furthermore, that win suggested that the side have already absorbed some of the more attacking, less cautious attitudes of the new coach, Romanian Mircea Lucescu.

As the New Year begins, League leaders Fiorentina (see page 12) know they can add Inter and Lazio back to the list of title rivals, a list that already included such as Parma and, of course, reigning champions Juventus.

We're into another year, and the title race is wide open...

Paddy Agnew

Still going strong...Lazio's Roberto Mancini

Pro-file Marcio Amoroso

Fleet-footed favourite at Udinese

STRANGE how the names of Amoroso and Amoruso seem to be in vogue at the moment.

Young midfielder Christian Amoroso is shaping well at Fiorentina and striker Nicola Amoruso is finding his feet again at Juventus, after a long injury lay-off. In Glasgow, Lorenzo Amoruso is at the heart of the Rangers defence. But none is making more impact than quicksilver Brazilian attacker Marcio Amoroso.

Even though Udinese are struggling at the wrong end of Serie A, that has nothing to do with Amoroso, who has been dynamism personified this season. Eight goals in 13 matches put him second in the Italian scoring standings. Only Fiorentina's extraordinary Gabriel Batistuta had a better total – 13.

The Udinese faithful did not take long to find another hero after last summer's departure of the German, Oliver Bierhoff. Amoroso always was the prime object of their desire.

He was very much an unknown quantity when Udinese paid Brazilian club Guarani £350,000 for him in the summer of 1996. Since then, however, he has turned out to be one of the shrewdest bargain buys of any Italian market.

He could hardly have had a better first season in Italy, scoring a dozen well-taken goals and easing his club towards UEFA Cup qualification, and although injury kept him out for a long spell last season he still managed five goals and a string of influential performances. Udinese finished in bronze-medal territory – their highest-ever placing.

The evidence was overwhelming. If Udinese had become a force to be reckoned with, it essentially was due to the adventurous attacking trident favoured by coach Albert Zaccheroni – Bierhoff's power and finishing in the air, Paolo Poggi's opportunism and grit, and the quick-footed ball skills and runs from deep of the wiry Amoroso.

Zaccheroni has since quit Udinese to take on the onerous responsibility of rebuilding Milan, but remains an admirer of the Amoroso style. "He's what I call a universal forward," says Zaccheroni.

"Amoroso doesn't just specialise in one or two areas of attack. There is a range of ways in which he can be dangerous. With his speed and the elusive nature of his running he is a great counter-attacker.

"He is very mobile and works well on the flanks – he is a very capable modern-day forward."

Amoroso was rewarded when he was called up by new Brazil national team manager Vanderley Luxemburgo for a friendly against Russia last November, and celebrated with two goals in a 5-1 win.

Never mind Ronaldo – there could yet be some mileage in a Brazilian front three starring Amoroso, Elber and Rivaldo.

Nick Bidwell

Club Udinese (Ita)
Country Brazil
Born July 5, 1974, in Brasilia
Previous club Guarani
International debut November 1998, v Russia
International caps 1 (2 goals)

Spain

The good, the bad...

How good are Real Madrid? How bad are Barcelona? And how much uglier can soccer violence get? Graham Turner tackles all three questions

Fiesta time in Tokyo...Real Madrid celebrate after lifting the World Club Cup with a 2-1 victory over Vasco da Gama

LIFE LOOKS pretty good at Real Madrid. The World Club Cup win in Tokyo not only provided a trophy which had eluded the club for 38 years but also a welcome respite from crisis talk.

Significantly, Fernando Hierro returned to the side in Tokyo, but during his injury-enforced absence the defence had looked so wobbly that coach Guus Hiddink changed his playing formation, operating with three central defenders and two wing-backs.

Having used this system against Inter in Milan, he maintained it against Vasco da Gama in Japan and in the following draw with Espanyol. The change was motivated by Hiddink's nervousness about Fernando Sanz and the poor form shown by Ivan Campo since his arrival from Mallorca.

The subsequent 3-2 win against Real Sociedad, followed by a not-too-nasty Champions League pairing with Dynamo Kyiv, have boosted Real's perspectives of a successful defence of their European crown.

Lorenzo Sanz, however, has not been spared an attack of presidential hiccups.

...and the downright ugly

WHEN Atletico Madrid came out of the UEFA Cup hat with Real Sociedad, we all brushed off the old cliches about fratricidal duels. Sadly, it was not all metaphor. The brutal murder of Aitor Zabaleta barely a stone's throw from Gate 6 at Vicente Calderon stadium aroused grief and indignation throughout Spain.

Zabaleta, a 28-year-old Real Sociedad fan who took time off from his job in a restaurant to travel to Madrid with his girlfriend, was having a pre-match drink near the stadium when a group of local ultras started to harass them.

He was trying to find refuge among the police on duty outside the ground when he was stabbed in the heart. Just like that.

As destiny would have it, Real Sociedad's next fixture was a league match which involved a return to the capital to take on Real. Their fans stayed away and every Sociedad player wore the name A Zabaleta on the back of his shirt. Three days later, the police arrested a 23-year-old who had a record longer than the average arm, based on robbery with violence.

He was on parole from a local prison, where he was serving a two-year sentence for stabbing a youngster in a disco. He is said to be a member of the ultra-ultra splinter group of *Frente Atletico* which calls itself *Bastion*.

I don't think that *World Soccer*, nor anybody else, needs to spend time on moralising. Those of us who love the game of football will have the same reaction. But, once the emotional responses have faded, the pertinent question marks about clubs' relationships with ultra groups have to be highlighted.

It's not just Atletico who have to balance the equation. The problem is long-standing. Barcelona had to address it when a member of the radical *Boixos Nois* group stabbed an Espanyol supporter to death some 10 years ago. Real Madrid have been obliged to take a stance on the notorious *Ultra Sur* group whose excursions into 'enemy territory' so often have ended in pitched battles.

Spanish clubs have tended to adopt a policy of kindness towards the ultras. They have embraced them, given them semi-official status and granted them special privileges. The attitude is valid. After all, the groups provide hard-core, passionate support for the team, and the clubs, understandably, feel that, properly channelled, this 'love of the colours' should be fostered.

But it's a bit like running a nuclear power station. Everything seems fine...until something goes wrong. Real Madrid have tried to re-direct the energies of the ultras by giving them their own office at Bernabeu stadium and subsidising trips to away games. Laudable...until something goes wrong.

One act of violence is enough for society to point the finger at the club and accuse them of sponsoring thugs and supporting fascist groups. Curiously, Real's unholy matrimony with the *Ultra Sur* ended in divorce after last season's memorable Champions League semi-final against Borussia Dortmund.

Their success in helping the goalposts to obey the laws of gravity at such a high-profile moment caused the club to suffer acute international embarrassment and even more acute financial embarrassment when UEFA threw the rule book at them. Real were prompted to move the goalposts themselves. The office was shut and diplomatic relations were severed. Ironically, kiss-and-make-up scenes were being scripted when Zabaleta was murdered just across the city.

Jesus Gil and his directors have been walking the same tightrope. The Atletico president, who moonlights in politics, makes no secret of his right-wing preferences and, in his footballing ventures, *Frente Atletico* is his standard-bearer.

Gil was so badly shaken by the murder that he was caught off-guard by a television crew and began the interview by snapping, "It was outside the stadium, it had nothing do with us", before expressing his grief at the senseless death.

Atletico, like Barcelona and Real Madrid, must now conduct a serious review of their policies. It is the only valid tribute to Aitor Zabaleta.

Just whisper the magic word 'Mista' in his ear and see what happens.

Master Mista is a former Under-18 international striker who had been cutting his teeth in Real's reserves until, one fine day, he decided to slam the door, jump on a plane and be presented to the media as a new Tenerife player, despite having six months to run on his contract.

In a move described as "a second Bosman", Mista has taken Real to court claiming that a contract which stipulates an annual salary of £17,000 and a buy-out clause of £3.25million is illegal, immoral and immaterial. Watch this space.

But there has been a major excuse for shameless rejoicing in Madrid – the sight of so many Dutchmen trying to plug their fingers into dykes down Barcelona way. Louis van Gaal and his not-so-merry-men had injected a dose of cyanide into the Christmas pudding by, in the first place, scuppering all those Catalan dreams of winning the Champions League final in Camp Nou and, secondly, by stringing together a run of league defeats which pushed them into the bottom half of the table, and had more than a few Madrid fans dreaming of Barcelona making history in their centenary year by being relegated for the first time.

The most poisonous result was the 3-1 home defeat by Villarreal, the newly-promoted, small-town club just about visible amid the small print on the map of Castellon province.

Nearly 5,000 of the local population headed up the A7 to witness the club's historic debut on the hallowed turf of Camp Nou, more than half-expecting a massacre for the side who previously had managed only three away goals all season. Even they could hardly believe the scoreline which, to re-hash a phrase uttered after a Brighton win at Liverpool, made one wonder if coded messages were still being sent to the French resistance.

The Catalans drifted away wondering how bad Barcelona could get and convinced that the weekly Monday-night board meeting would loosen the rope on the guillotine. It didn't.

Opinion polls revealed that 95 per cent of fans were in favour of giving Van Gaal the chop, and the campaign for his decapitation had become quite fierce. Not only in the media but also in the dressing-room. One local paper 'adjusted' the translation of an interview given to a Dutch magazine just enough to suggest that Louis had given his own players a right-royal slagging-off in single Dutch, and no amount of later surgery could repair the players' noses which had been put of joint.

Rivaldo was the most openly rebellious, with the non-playing half of the squad ready to support him with instant dissent. Not even Josep Guardiola's return to midfield after a 320-day injury absence could put things right on the field, and it had become obvious that morale and human relationships were more relevant factors than the sort of tactical changes which Hiddink had used to keep Real Madrid on the domestic and international maps.

Consequence of tragedy...Real Sociedad fans bear the coffin of Aitor Zabaleta

Pro-file Michel Salgado

Celta's raiding full-back on a hot streak

AS RECENTLY as the 96-97 season, the average Celta fan's ambitions were limited to success in the club's perennial relegation battles. At the same time, the club's young full-back Michel Salgado harboured few illusions of grandeur as he struggled to kick-start his career on loan at Salamanca in the Second Division.

How times change. Just two years down the line, the Sky Blues from Vigo are flavour of the month in Spain and beyond, while 23-year-old Salgado is attracting rare praise at home and in Europe.

Celta's best start to a season – the new year arrived with a lingering hangover from UEFA Cup exploits against Liverpool and Aston Villa, not to mention a first win at Real Madrid in 50 years and a lofty second place in the league – has been fuelled by a desire to prove people wrong.

Last season coach Victor Fernandez was sacked by Tenerife, while no less than five of his starters – Mazinho, Penev, Karpin, Caceres and Juan Sanchez – are Valencia cast-offs. As for local boy Salgado, after 32 appearances for Celta, his career was at a crossroads when he was farmed out to Salamanca in the summer of 1996 – but it was there that his career took off. His true grit and bags of talent were a major factor in Salamanca's promotion campaign and nobody was surprised by a swift recall to Vigo.

Salgado's swashbuckling performances down the right flank were a highlight of Celta's European qualification, and in May he was a member of Spain's European championship-winning under-21 side. The only shadow over a breakthrough season was his reckless tackle that shattered Juninho's ankle in January, and kept the Brazilian out of the World Cup.

The odd setback aside, Salgado continues to cement his reputation as Spain's best raiding full-back. He made his international debut in Javier Clemente's final game, the disastrous 3-2 defeat in Cyprus, but new coach Jose Camacho stuck with him for the European qualifier in Israel in October. Spain won 2-1, but for the on-the-rise youngster the best was yet to come.

An awesome demonstration of the attacking full-back's art earned him match-star status in the 2-2 draw against Italy in November. Next day the Italian papers were full of 'a star is born' stories while Milan coach Alberto Zaccheroni hailed him as "the best right-back in Europe". Naturally, Salgado was chuffed to bits. "That kind of praise helps convince me that I'm doing my job well. Frankly though, if Victor Fernandez and Jose Camacho are happy with my performances, that'll do for me."

Salgado is under contract at Celta until 2000, but the word is that he will join Real Madrid at the end of this season. He says: "You won't find me complaining if people think I'm good enough for Real Madrid, but at the moment I'm only interested in playing for Celta."

The UEFA Cup quarter-final draw means a third former European champion, in this case Marseille, will visit Vigo's Balaidos stadium. Salgado says: "We keep getting the toughest draws, but we know by beating these guys we're making history, too." And proving a few people wrong in the process.

Jeff King

Club: Celta Vigo
Country: Spain
Born: October 22, 1975, at Neves, Galicia
Previous club: Salamanca (loan)
International debut: Sept 5, 1998, v Cyprus
International caps: 3

Pulling away...Bayern triumphed 2-0 in the fiery clash with second-placed Leverkusen

Bayern on course

Keir Radnedge reviews the first half of the Bundesliga season

CHAMPIONS League quarter-finalists Bayern ended the autumn campaign in fine style. Not only did they snap up the draw away to Manchester United which ensured a place in Europe's last eight, but they finished eight points clear in the Bundesliga at the winter break. Still, however, president Franz Beckenbauer and his staff are not satisfied – with a major summer clear-out of players on the cards.

First signal of intent was the open criticism from both general manager Uli Hoeness and coach Ottmar Hitzfeld of erratic midfielder Mario Basler. Basler, accused by Hoeness of being "too lazy for his own good", appears certain to move on – as does captain Thomas Helmer, whose contract is not being extended beyond this season. Beckenbauer said: "It was not an easy decision for Ottmar Hitzfeld to take but we all reach an age at which we can't go on." Helmer, 33, who has been with Bayern since 1992, played 68 times for Germany.

Bayern widened their lead at the top of the League when they beat second-placed Bayer Leverkusen 2-0 in their penultimate match before the winter break. After that bad-tempered game, Bayern played host to Wolfsburg and moved in front with a header by Germany striker Carsten Jancker five minutes from the interval. Brazilian Elber struck from close range in the 86th minute to join Wolfsburg's Andrzej Juskowiak in first place in the scorers' table with 11 goals. Bosnian attacking midfielder Hasan Salihamidzic completed the demolition from the penalty spot in the dying moments.

"I am pleased to have seen another fine performance just before the winter break," said Hitzfeld. "It was not easy because Wolfsburg have a very compact defence."

Bayern have 44 points from 18 games and Leverkusen 36. Bayer wrapped up with a 1-1 draw against Hansa Rostock. Champions Kaiserslautern finished third at the break on 34 points after also drawing their pre-Christmas match 1-1, with Munich 1860, who thus ended fourth on 32. The Bundesliga resumes on February 19.

Croatian defender Boris Zivkovic put Leverkusen in front against Rostock with a header in the 39th minute. Rostock were reduced to 10 men when captain Timo Lange was sent off in the 62nd minute. But striker Oliver Neuville levelled from inside the penalty area 10 minutes later. Two Leverkusen players, Ramelow and fellow midfielder Nico Kovac, were sent off in the last two minutes.

Still, Leverkusen coach Christoph Daum was happy enough. He said: "Ending the year in second place is a remarkable achievement. We will do our best to make sure the Bundesliga remains exciting to follow but I don't think anybody can stop Bayern. Our main goal is to stay where we are."

1860 dominated the game against Kaiserslautern and took the lead through striker Bernhard Winkler, who collected a fine pass from Markus Schroth. A blunder from 1860's Austrian midfielder Harald Cerny gave an equaliser to promising striker Marco Reich nine minutes later.

"We were under a lot of pressure and we were perhaps not the better team but we kept fighting," said Kaiserslautern coach Otto Rehhagel. "Our goal is a place in Europe, so I must be satisfied with our first half of the season."

Up in fifth place – remarkable after their poor start – were Dortmund, where Matthias Sammer still dreams of a comeback. Sammer, outstanding when Germany won Euro 96 and then again in Dortmund's Champions League triumph a year later, has missed all but three League games since then through knee trouble. He still believes he will play again – "but not this season".

Sadly, we have heard him say that before.

Hertha Berlin have improved their fire-power with the signing of under-rated Polish striker Piotr Reiss from Lech Poznan, while Stuttgart hope £500,000 Macedonia midfielder Srdjan Zaharievski from Sileks Kratovo can help turn their season around. Some task. Internal unrest forced the departure of coach Winfried Schafer, with assistant Wolfgang Rolff taking over as caretaker.

Meanwhile, struggling Eintracht Frankfurt decided aide Bernard Lippert might do a better job than axed Horst Ehmantraut. Another dismissal was Georg Volkert as general manager of Nurnberg, barely a fortnight after the departure of coach Willi Reimann. Volkert's departure threw a spanner in the works of Nurnberg's bid to sign veteran Germany goalkeeper Andreas Kopke from Marseille, where he is surplus to requirements.

Dortmund, resigned to seeing Stefan Klos move to Rangers, have been considering a bid for Jens Lehmann, unhappy on the bench at Milan.

On the international scene, Franz Beckenbauer has been formally appointed to spearhead Germany's bid for the 2006 World Cup finals – and was blessed with his customary good fortune when bidding rivals England were struck by the FIFA vote scandal. More seriously, the German hand has been strengthened by serious stadium redevelopment proposals from local authorities in both Berlin and Frankfurt.

The DFB has offered to send a full-strength side to the Confederations Cup next summer if France withdraw while, more immediately, Erich Ribbeck will use the Bundesliga's winter break to experiment with his team and tactics in Florida with friendlies against the United States and Colombia on February 6 and 9.

Finally, just to prove that big-time football is not all about money...the DFB has launched a foundation for action against violence in football. It will be named after Daniel Nivel – the French gendarme seriously injured by German hooligans at the World Cup finals in France.

At last, FIFA see sense

Andre Duclos on the Confederations Cup saga

WE WAITED long enough, but in the end the French federation, under severe pressure from the French League, took the only sensible decision and pulled out of that most fatuous and redundant of competitions, the Confederations Cup.

Perhaps FIFA and Sepp Blatter will now come to their senses, think again, and realise that the game, or the tournament, is not worth the candle.

You may remember that in the euphoria which followed the World Cup success, the FFF acceded to FIFA's request to send a team to Mexico City in January. But the violent protests which ensued, not just in France but in England, where the likes of Chelsea and Arsenal stood to lose the services of the likes of Desailly, Leboeuf, Anelka and Vieira, caused the FFF to back down and back out.

FIFA did not give up. Back they came with an alternative date: August. At the start of a season which features a gigantised European and UEFA Cup!

Again the foolish FFF said yes. Again the League protested, until at last, the FFF withdrew again. Thank goodness.

The Sylvestre-Dabo affair will run and run. Inter have appealed against the FIFA decision that they must pay Rennes £1.6million for each of the young players, who were lured to Italy this summer; £3.2m in all.

Both the players appear to have a future in Italy. But Rennes believed they were robbed. They were demanding £4.4m for Sylvestre and half that sum for Dabo, insisting that both belonged to them.

This is because, according to the law of French football, a player who comes up through the youth scheme is obliged to sign his first pro contract with the club which developed him. FIFA were not of that view. They based their decision, reasonably enough, on the amount of money spent by a club in its youth scheme, where for every boy who comes through, a dozen probably do not.

To the riposte that the Bosman ruling makes such a decision illegal, FIFA's Zen Ruffinen responded that he had the support of the European commissioner, Karel Van Miert.

The situation is complicated by the fact that Rennes offered the two players such poor terms that they wanted to leave. Inter, who wanted to pay a mere £660,000 for the two, emphasise that no contract with the Rennes club existed and that FIFA are in effect making it up as they go along. We shall see.

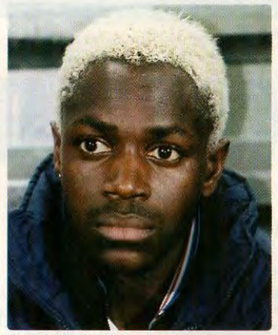
For Ibrahim Ba, with his startling dyed hair, leaving Milan for Newcastle would be something of a great escape, presuming the deal goes through. Things have not gone well for him in Italy since the arrival of Alberto Zaccheroni as coach, with his penchant for a three-pronged attack. Ba, of Senegalese origin but a French passport holder, who broke through – or seemed to – in the Tournoi de France 1997, should be invaluable in putting crosses on the formidable head of Duncan Ferguson. Having missed the World Cup and struggled at San Siro, Ba must be hoping that his luck has turned at last.

Lens, bundled out of the Champions League at home by Kyiv Dynamo, whom they had so gallantly held to a draw in Ukraine, surely had every right to resent Tony Vairelles' dismissal against Arsenal at Wembley, and UEFA's subsequent failure to amnesty him, although they very properly punished his nemesis, Lee Dixon.

Dixon fouled Vairelles from behind, then mysteriously collapsed. To sanction Dixon could and should have meant pardon for Vairelles, but it did not. And with Pascal Nouma so erratic this season in the Lens attack, the club simply could not afford to lose their star striker, who had scored their goal in Kyiv.

Vairelles, who greatly enjoys playing for Lens, gives his all, and rebukes any team-mate he thinks does not, seems almost sure to leave at the end of this season. Juventus are interested.

Nouma, once a Paris Saint-Germain striker, arrived at Lens this summer and received an odd greeting from Fred Dehu, that busy defender, who said that though it might sound strange, he had the impression that Nouma would always be late for training! An affronted Nouma proclaims that he is a changed man and now is never late, and indeed, there seems no reason to doubt his application.



Newcastle signing...Ibrahim Ba

What does remain in doubt is his scoring ability, his capacity to put away the chances. Once upon a time he had it and elicited the praise and admiration of numerous coaches and critics, not least his present manager, Daniel Leclercq. But as we saw at Wembley, something has gone badly and mysteriously wrong.

Nouma says he will keep on keeping on; he has no desire to change his ways of training. Things themselves will change, he promises, when he scores at last and thus feels liberated. It is hardly an unfamiliar story.

Pro-file Carsten Jancker

The big fellow up front for Bayern

SOME 15 years or so since Germany's attack was led by towering hulks such as Horst 'Monster' Hrubesch and Dieter Hoeness, new national coach Erich Ribbeck might be tempted to go down the same route and put his faith in broad-shouldered Bayern Munich striker Carsten Jancker.

He won his first cap as a substitute in the 3-1 Euro 2000 victory in Moldova last October, and has a strong claim for a regular place at the point of the attack.

After all, for the past 18 months he has been in exceptional form for Bayern, finishing last season as club top scorer with 13 goals and cutting an impressive figure again this time, as the Bavarians seek to mount a three-way assault on Champions League, Bundesliga and German Cup.

With forwards such as Jancker, Elber, Ali Daei, Salihamidzic and Zickler available, Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld feels it advisable to rotate them, mixing and matching his options. But there can be no doubt which pairing has worked best. It's the combination of Jancker and the buzzing Brazilian, Giovane Elber.

Given Jancker's height and bodybuilder size, he inevitably is regarded as something of a battering ram. Yet he is not there just for his threat in the air, his strength in holding off defenders, or the power of his sheer physical intimidation. On the contrary, he is much more mobile than he is given credit for, and has a surprisingly deft touch for such a big man.

This is no clumsy heavyweight whose only task is to provoke penalty-box mayhem. In terms of technique he is more than capable, as proved by the wonderful volleyed goal he struck from outside the area against Bochum in December.

"Jancker could be the ideal man to lead the German attack," says Hrubesch, the former Hamburg and Germany striker. "He has the ability and the intelligence, and age is on his side. He's only 24, whereas other possible choices such as Ulf Kirsten and Olaf Marschall are nearly 10 years older."

Jancker has not always been well regarded in German soccer circles, although he is now an established hero. Early in his career he made little headway with Hansa Rostock and did even worse at Koln, with only five appearances and one goal.

Only after a loan move to Rapid Vienna did his prospects look up. He caught the eye with a six-goal haul in the club's march to the Final of the 1996 Cup-winners Cup, whereupon he moved to Bayern and, after a transitional first season, struck gold.

"I'm in my element at Bayern," he says. "This is the biggest and the best club in Germany, and I'm surrounded by magnificent players. I'm proud to call them team-mates.

"I couldn't be in a better place to improve as a player. The competition for places is incredible, and it's work or lose out."

Right now, Carsten Jancker is winning.

Nick Bidwell

Club Bayern Munich
Country Germany
Born August 28, 1974, in Wismar
Previous clubs TSG Wismar, Hansa Rostock, 1FC Koln, Rapid Vienna (Aut)
International debut October 1998, v Moldova
International caps 1 (0 goals)
Honours Cup-winners Cup runner-up 1996 (Rapid Vienna); German League 1997 (Bayern); German Cup 1998 (Bayern)

Super sub...Chelsea striker Tore Andre Flo has come off the bench to score some vital goals

Chelsea take top spot

Vialli's boys add steel to their growing title challenge

THE KELLYGATE scandal, discussed elsewhere in this issue, threatened to plunge English football into a period of uncertainty as we entered 1999. Events on the pitch were just as unclear, with the Premiership shaping up as a four-horse race between Chelsea, Manchester United, Aston Villa and Arsenal.

Chelsea went top of the table after a victory over George Graham's improving Tottenham. This followed an impressive performance at Old Trafford when Chelsea, inspired by Gianfranco Zola, outplayed Manchester United and were unlucky to leave with just one point.

Up until now, much of the attention paid to Gianluca Vialli's side has been focused on the Italian coach's squad rotation policy. Chelsea's unbeaten record in the League (17 and counting since the opening day defeat by Coventry) tended to be overlooked in the rush to criticise Vialli for shuffling his pack too frequently.

The serious knee injury suffered by Pierluigi Casiraghi and Brian Laudrup's return to Denmark have limited Vialli's striking options, but he rarely fields the same starting 11 in successive matches. Norwegian striker Tore Andre Flo has largely been kept in reserve on the bench – with impressive results. His injury-time goal secured a vital home win over Aston Villa, for instance.

Previously unheard terms such as determined, dogged and hard to beat are being used to describe Vialli's men. Chelsea have developed the knack of scoring last-gasp winners and have to be considered serious title contenders.

In contrast, Manchester United have developed the knack of conceding late goals – Spurs came from 2-0 down to snatch a 2-2 draw. Both Tottenham goals were Sol Campbell headers from set-pieces and relative defensive frailties may yet undermine United's domestic and European campaigns. They finished the Champions League group stage not only as top scorers but also with 11 goals conceded, more than any of the other quarter-finalists.

Jaap Stam is proving adept at handling most Premiership strikers, but Alex Ferguson has yet to find a central defensive partner for the Dutchman. More worrying for Ferguson is Peter Schmeichel's form. By announcing that he will be ending his Old Trafford career this summer, Schmeichel has merely drawn attention to failings that may well have gone unnoticed.

However, the New Year is usually the time that United find their domestic rhythm after their autumnal exertions in Europe, so don't be surprised if Ferguson's men revive to face Internazionale in the Champions League with renewed confidence.

What of Aston Villa, the early pacesetters? They were written off by many after the defeat at Chelsea but they bounced back impressively at home to beat Arsenal. Villa were 2-0 down at half-time after Dennis Bergkamp rediscovered the scoring touch that has eluded him since the World Cup. But tactical changes by John Gregory turned the game around and Villa ran out 3-2 winners.

The defeat at Villa highlighted Arsenal's problems so far this season. Without back-up for the World Cup-weary Bergkamp, Petit and Vieira, the defending champions have struggled. But it is worth remembering that Arsene Wenger's side had fewer points than now at this stage of the season last year, and that Arsenal were dismissed as lightweights – before going on to do the Double.

Vieira, Petit and Bergkamp were all on target as Arsenal beat Leeds 3-1 to end an impressive run for the Yorkshire side. Leeds and Middlesbrough, looking more solid at the back this time round, seem good bets for places in next season's new-look UEFA Cup.

At the foot of the table, Blackburn appear to be reviving under Brian Kidd. The former Manchester United assistant manager is likely to be given substantial funds for rebuilding work; he has already signed Keith Gillespie from Newcastle and is in the market for another striker.

Newcastle also sold England midfielder David Batty to Leeds as Ruud Gullit continues to trim his squad. So determined was Batty to return to the club where he began his career that he waived a bonus due him from Newcastle.

Gavin Hamilton

SCOTLAND

That's enough, says McCann

LATER THIS year, Celtic chairman Fergus McCann will sell his shares in the club and return to his adopted homeland, Bermuda, hoping for a lifetime of peace and tranquillity – two qualities noticeably absent in his five years at the helm.

Many of the stress-related problems that have been a feature of his period in charge have resulted from his remarkable penchant for signing players prone to developing psychological difficulties.

Pierre Van Hooijdonk was first in this category, followed by Paolo Di Canio, both of whom left Celtic following wars of attrition with McCann and went on to leave indelible marks in English football.

Portuguese forward Jorge Cadete was another, walking out on Celtic in an apparently fragile mental state and seeking sanctuary in Lisbon.

So when McCann signed Australian international Marko Viduka from Croatia Zagreb for £3million in December, there was little surprise when the player returned to Australia, due to his inability to focus on playing football, before he had kicked a ball.

These ongoing problems must have proved painful enough for McCann, but his patience came close to snapping when he was approached by a consortium headed by Kenny Dalglish and rock star Jim Kerr, anxious to relieve him of his 51 per cent stake in Celtic.

The approach was rejected in extremely unflattering terms by McCann, who clearly felt the consortium's offer undervalued the club. He wants to see his shareholding divided among genuine fans before he returns to Bermuda.

Henrik Larsson has helped Celtic remain in touch with Rangers at the top of the League, but French striker Stephane Guivarc'h has strengthened the Ibrox bid to reclaim the title from their city rivals, as has the signing of winger Neil McCann from Hearts.

Alan Fairley

WALES

Freak injury hits Barry

BARRY TOWN were beaten for only the second time this season, when Carmarthen Town also ended their run of 30 unbeaten away League games.

The main story from the match, though, was the injury received by Barry keeper Andy Dibble, the former Wales international, who found severe burn marks on one arm after the match and needed skin graft treatment which will keep him out for the rest of the season.

The burns are believed to have been caused by the pitch markings, and the League are investigating.

Barry recovered from the defeat and took revenge on fellow title chasers Aberystwyth Town, hammering them 5-1.

The 'cash for votes' scandal seems to be taking a turn for the worse for the Welsh FA, with accusations by English FA chairman Keith Wiseman that the idea for the loan/gift came from a Welsh official. The FAW, under almost constant flak from grassroots level, can ill afford another scandal, but the story looks likely to continue to simmer until an English inquiry unearths the facts.

In the northern Second Division, CPD Porthmadog are maintaining their push for an immediate return to the top flight, but are being threatened by Cefn Druids.

In the southern Second Division, Port Talbot Athletic are keeping up with early leaders Ton Pentre.

Mel Thomas

N.IRELAND

Crusaders on the match

WHILE Linfield and Glentoran fight for the leadership of the Premier League, Crusaders had became a form team of the first half of the season.

Unfashionable 'Crues', based in Belfast's docklands, are lurking behind the Big Two after looking to be heading for relegation in the opening stages.

After the loss of their mercurial manager, Roy Walker, Crusaders appointed 32-year-old full-back Aaron Callaghan as player-manager. The likeable Dubliner's task was made no easier by the loss of several leading performers, such as striker Stephen Baxter and defender Alan Dornan, both of whom followed Walker to Glenavon.

With minimal financial resources, Crusaders looked doomed to struggle. But after losing their first three League games, they have improved so much that they reached third place, while, ironically, Glenavon are beleaguered in mid-table.

One of a number of astute signings made by Callaghan was the First Division's top scorer, Crawford McCrea, from Ballyclare Comrades in October.

McCrea's former manager at Ballyclare, Alan Campbell, has been appointed to the hot seat at First Division Bangor, where former international Stephen McBride resigned as player-manager following a run of defeats which left the Seasiders struggling to maintain second place behind local rivals Ards.

The musical chairs continued as McBride joined Crusaders as a player, and former Glenavon defender Paul Byrne took over at Ballyclare.

The first silverware of the season was won by Glentoran, who defeated struggling Portadown 3-1 in the Gold Cup decider. The scorers were up and coming Andy Kirk (19) and Rory Hamill (22), and 29-year-old John Devine, who has played over 250 League games for the Glens.

Roy Kitson

Pro-file Barry Ferguson

One for the Tartan Army to cherish

FEW Scottish footballers these days can be considered to be in the world-class category. The stream of top players to emerge from Scotland over the years has virtually run dry. Now, however, the arrival of Dutch coach Dick Advocaat at Rangers has resulted in the emergence of a supremely talented midfielder. Without doubt he is the most exciting young prospect in the Scottish game for many years.

Barry Ferguson, younger brother of former Scottish international Derek, is only 20 but has secured an automatic place in his club's first team and is widely acknowledged as a future Scotland regular.

Praise for the youngster is by no means coming solely from Scotsmen, as can be the case with homegrown talent. Two of the greatest admirers of Ferguson's abilities are respected continental coaches – Advocaat and Christoph Daum, technical director of Bundesliga club Bayer Leverkusen.

Daum singled out Ferguson for special praise in advance of his side's UEFA Cup encounter with Rangers earlier in the season, saying that he had been impressed during spying missions and suggesting the youngster's transfer value could be in the region of £15million. Daum's comments were not taken too seriously, but his sentiments proved to be accurate as Ferguson inspired Rangers to a 3-2 aggregate win.

Advocaat risked criticism on his arrival at Ibrox in the summer by masterminding a wholesale clearout of established stars, and he took a particularly hazardous risk in releasing that talented but injury-plagued midfielder Ian Durrant. The gap he left suggested the midfield would be lacking a creative edge, but Advocaat clearly had Ferguson in mind when he made his decision.

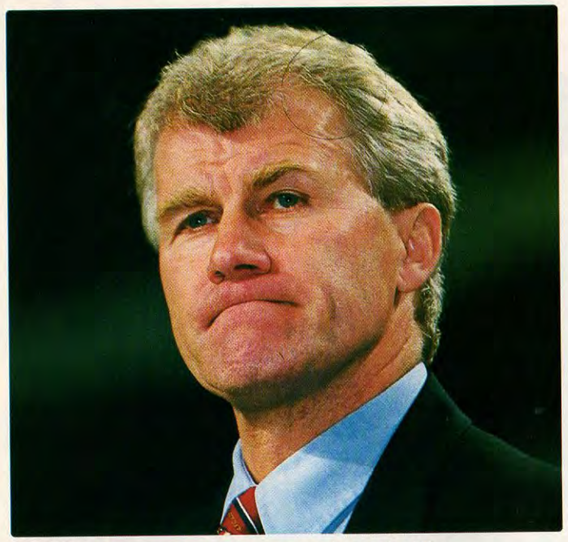
"Having seen Ferguson, I knew I had an adequate replacement," says Advocaat. "I wouldn't have let Ian go if I had not had confidence that Barry could take his place."

Advocaat then provided Ferguson with something he had been denied by former manager Walter Smith – an extended run in the first team. The player, who had signed for the club at 15, responded in a positive way.

Now he already has a League Cup medal, after helping Rangers to beat St Johnstone in this season's Final, and he appears certain to gain many more honours in what is likely to be a rewarding career.

Alan Fairley

Club Rangers
Country Scotland
Born February 2, 1978, Glasgow
Previous clubs None
International debut September 1998, v Lithuania
International caps 1 (0 goals)
Honours Scottish League Cup 1998



Dane on the wane...poor results forced Morten Olsen out of Ajax

Ajax slip up

Olsen paid the price for the De Boer fiasco, says Klaas-Jan Droppert

HOLLAND

UNHAPPY DAYS are here for Ajax. Fourth in the table, 12 points behind Feyenoord...a humiliating defeat by Porto means no more European soccer this season...Danish coach Morten Olsen dismissed. Yes, times are hard.

Olsen did not make things any easier for his former employers. After his forced resignation, he called a media conference and let fly.

He had some unusually harsh criticism of the Ajax directors, and indirectly blamed the De Boer brothers for what had happened.

During the summer the twins insisted that they wanted to leave the club to join Barcelona. Ajax insisted that they should honour their contracts. The twins said that they could not play under Olsen, because his training methods were boring. Eventually they lost their case and had to stay.

"You can't work with people who don't want to stay," Olsen said. "I should have sent them away, but I couldn't. If we had lost the case I would have been the scapegoat.

"The board did not support me very well during that period. They did not realise the impact those words had in the dressing-room."

Club chairman Michael Van Praag took a different view. He pointed out that there were other reasons for Olsen's departure. "Morten likes to make players responsible for their own actions," he said. "That works with some players, but not with the different nationalities we have. The gap between him and the players was unbridgeable."

Olsen has a reputation as a fine coach but he has a sad record – he has left every club where he was worked before his contract expired. But Anderlecht appear keen to give him a chance to repeat his League-and-Cup double success of last season with Ajax.

Meanwhile, Jan Wouters, the former Ajax and Holland player who had been reserve team coach, has been promoted to take charge of the first team, and won plenty of praise when his team drew 1-1 away to Feyenoord in his second game in charge.

Two other coaches have been sacked in the past month: Hans Van der Zee by Sparta and Fritz Korbach by De Graafschap.

Sparta are one of only four Dutch clubs never to be relegated, but that could happen this season. Hence the sacking. Poor gates forced sales of top players, including Holland's other twins, Gerard and Dennis De Nooyer, who went to Heerenveen.

Eric Gerets, Belgian skipper of PSV during the late 80s, has confirmed that he will succeed Bobby Robson as coach there next season. PSV wanted to sign Gerets earlier, but he insisted on seeing out his contract with Club Brugge.

Stan Valcx, the former PSV and Holland defender who was going to retire at the end of the season to become an agent, has quit the game earlier than planned because of knee trouble.

PORTUGAL

Don't kiss Sporting goodbye

THE situation as the League campaign reaches halfway reveals much the same old story. The larger clubs are going to run away down the road to the title and the rest are going to try to qualify for the UEFA Cup or to avoid relegation.

Some, indeed, will be trying merely to survive and hope for better days in the future.

Sporting Lisbon are renowned for kissing goodbye to their title hopes, but they are still in the running this season. In their recent visit to Oporto they played very well, but had no luck.

Eventually they lost 3-2 to Porto, all three of their opponents' goals being scored from free-kicks – controversial every one of them – by the Brazilian Doriva.

So Porto went six points ahead of Sporting, but all is by no means lost.

Boavista occupy second place, but few are convinced that they have what it takes to do as well in the second half of the season as in the first.

Benfica are not out of the running, though the logic of their latest signing has escaped many fans. Why did coach Graeme Souness sign 34-year-old Dean Saunders, now with his 11th club?

Saunders once cost Liverpool's manager (Souness) a British record fee (£2.9million) but that was seven years ago. Can he still do now what he could do then, Benfica's *socios* are asking.

People are no longer protesting so much about the number of British players in Benfica's ranks: even Michael Thomas has been winning applause. But this latest question is a long way from being answered.

Another newcomer, Jorge Cadete, is a much more acceptable signing. He is a veteran and once captained rivals Sporting, but Benfica fans will forgive him that if he shows even a fraction of his old form.

Alberto da Silva

REP IRELAND

Busy year ahead for McCarthy

MICK MCCARTHY and the national team are facing a busy year. In addition to five European Championship qualifying games, the FAI has arranged five friendlies during 1999.

On February 10, Paraguay will pay their first visit to Lansdowne Road as a warm-up for the game against Macedonia in March. Sweden will also play their first game at Lansdowne on April 28. And a Peace International has been arranged against Northern Ireland for May 29. The proceeds from this game will go to victims of the Omagh bombing.

At the end of May, McCarthy will take his squad to France to prepare for the Euro 2000 qualifiers. They will play a Brittany XI in Nantes.

Away games have also been pencilled in against Poland (August 18) and Denmark (October 9), but these are dependent on how the Euro qualifiers work out.

Eoin Hand, the man who introduced Mick McCarthy to the Irish team back in 1984, has got a new job. He is career guidance officer at the FAI. His new role will be to advise young players and their families on the professional game in Ireland and abroad.

Brian Kerr has been voted Manager of the Year (all sports) for the second year running. Kerr got his award for his success with the Irish Under-16 and Under-18 teams.

The most intriguing tie in the first round proper of the FAI Cup is the meeting of old Dublin rivals Shamrock Rovers and Shelbourne. Rovers are currently Shel's tenants at Tolka Park while their new stadium in Tallaght is being built.

The FAI is continuing with its policy of playing Under-21 games at venues outside Dublin. The game against Yugoslavia on June 4 will be played at Turner's Cross, Cork.

Sean Creedon

Three goals, three points...Porto came out on top from the clash with Sporting

AUSTRIA

Sindelar is still the star

NEARLY 60 years have passed since Matthias Sindelar died, but the legendary 'Man of Paper' is not forgotten in his adopted city of Vienna, where he graced the FK Austria and national teams before the Anschluss and the last hurrah of the 'Wunderteam' against the Germans.

A poll for Austrian Player of the Century was won by the man who began life in Moravia as Matej Sindelar, ahead of Ernst Ocwirk, another 'Austrianer' with a Slav background, and Gerhard Hanappi of Rapid, two outstanding postwar performers.

There was no place therefore for Hans Krankl, current coach of Salzburg, who finished the autumn half-season in fifth position in the League.

Attendances in Salzburg have dropped to around the 3,000 mark, an all-time low reflecting the general decline of interest in football in Austria.

Interest is down everywhere but Graz. Champions Sturm and cross-town rivals Grazer AK respectively occupied first and third place when soccer closed down, apart from the indoor tournaments, for three months. Sturm at least earned some money from their Champions League group matches.

Grazer AK, meanwhile, have been hoping to beef up the attack; their defensive record, the second best, has kept them in League contention.

Styria's third club, Vorwarts Steyr, are at the foot of the table with three points from 19 matches, nine behind Lustenau and 13 behind the other minnows, SV Ried.

Meanwhile, work on the joint bid for the 2004 European Championship finals, goes on. Spain now seem to be the chief danger to Austria's proposed co-hosting of the 'Danube Games' with Hungary.

Bob Vaughan

BELGIUM

Franky falls from grace

IF VETERAN Franky Van Der Elst is really set on a new career as a coach, he would do well to condemn his own recent example.

Van Der Elst, who is 37 and in his last season as a player, was sent off – somewhat harshly – for only the second time in his long career.

He fouled Sammy Vandenbossche while playing for Club Brugge against Aalst, who missed the resultant penalty. So Club, the leaders, managed to draw 0-0, despite finishing with nine men having lost Aleksander Ilic to a late injury after using all their substitutes.

Van Der Elst's disciplinary record might appeal to his possible new employers, the owners of the newly amalgamated club on the outskirts of Antwerp.

Germinal Ekeren and Third Division Beerschot are merging, if they can find a coach and a name. Germinal Beerschot Metropool and Germinal Beerschot Combination are possibilities, but unwieldy.

Ekeren's current coach, Herman Helleputte, seems to have been overlooked in discussions about the future. "Maybe they will make me president," he joked after Ekeren beat Club Brugge 2-0 in their last game before the winter break. Brugge lead the table by two points from Genk, but Mouscron were climbing fast, having taken 20 points out of 24.

One of Van Der Elst's old Belgium team-mates, goalkeeper Jean-Marie Pfaff, had a controversial start to his career as coach with promoted Ostende. Pfaff was banned from the touchline after a prolonged argument with a referee.

Ariel Jacobs is the new coach of Molenbeek, forcing national coach Georges Leekens to find somebody else to run the Under-21 and Under-18 squads.

Nicholas Harling

Ditched by Grasshopper...Rolf Fringer

SWITZERLAND

Grasshopper sack Fringer

CHAMPIONS Grasshopper rewarded coach Rolf Fringer for taking them into second place behind Servette in the championship with a Christmas sack – and not one of the Santa Claus kind.

Fringer, who took over Switzerland's most prestigious team when Christian Gross moved to Tottenham, was released despite having guided the Zurich club to last season's League title. Roger Hegi, who resigned as coach of relegation-threatened St Gallen immediately before the winter break, will take over.

Unfairly, perhaps, Fringer paid the penalty for not having brought Hoppers through to the Champions League group stage. So his fate was effectively sealed before the end of August.

Fringer, who joined Grasshopper after an unsuccessful stint as coach of the Swiss national team when they failed to qualify for the 1998 World Cup, had a contract until June 2000.

Keir Radnedge

Pro-file Ruud Van Nistelrooy

The kid from Never Thought Of

MOST fans of PSV Eindhoven feared for the current season, and they were right to do so. The departure of four internationals meant a serious loss of quality from their squad, and only now are they recovering. Few clubs could lose men of the calibre of Philip Cocu, Jaap Stam, Boudewijn Zenden and Wim Jonk without missing them.

Now, down to seventh in the table and out of the Champions League, PSV are struggling. But one man, at least, has filled hearts with joy. He is 22-year-old Ruud Van Nistelrooy, who came from Heerenveen for £4.75million – the largest sum ever paid by a Dutch club for a Dutch player.

His rapid rise was just what PSV needed. Halfway through the season he was top scorer in the League, with 16 goals – three more than his total return at Heerenveen all last term.

"Scoring has been easier because I don't seem to need so many chances these days," he says. "It's part of my development. I always want to show what I can do.

"I don't know why everything is happening so fast and so smoothly, but I seem to adapt easily to new things."

Van Nistelrooy has a distinctive style, keeping the ball close, turning and shooting quickly and precisely. Opponents find him difficult to mark because, according to the player, "I'm in motion for 90 minutes, always trying to lose my markers, and defenders never know what I'm going to do".

Amateur club Nooit Gedacht – which translates as Never Thought Of – were Van Nistelrooy's first, in his native province of Brabant. He turned professional with nearby Den Bosch and was there for nearly four seasons without doing anything out of the ordinary. Then, after moving to Heerenveen, he helped his new club to win the Cup and so earn their first European place.

Instead of chasing the Cup-winners Cup this season, however, Van Nistelrooy joined PSV and, despite their problems, has had a marvellous start.

Not surprisingly, new national coach Frank Rijkaard gave him his first cap in a friendly against Germany late last year. His response was: "This is a dream come true for me. I had a good first half and a lesser second, but it was a fantastic experience."

We'll hear a lot more about Ruud Van Nistelrooy. Who at Never Thought Of would have thought he would do so well?

Klaas-Jan Droppert

Club PSV Eindhoven
Country Holland
Born July 1, 1976, in Oss
Previous clubs FC Den Bosch, Heerenveen
International debut November 1998, v Germany
International caps 1 (0 goals)
Honours None

New coach of Herfolge...former international hero John Jensen

Jensen switch

Brondby midfielder moves into management

DENMARK

JOHN JENSEN, one of the heroes of Denmark's 1992 European Championship success, is moving into management next summer. After a final fling with Brondby in the second half of the Danish season from March to June, he will retire as player to become coach of Superliga rivals Herfolge, the little village side who amazingly keep up with the big boys.

Jensen, nicknamed 'Faxe' in Denmark after a brand of beer thrown over his head in a youth team prank, has long been a footballing folk hero to the Danes.

His all-action midfield style and infamously awful shooting endeared him to fans everywhere. When he played for Arsenal, the supporters shouted 'shoot' even when he was in his own half. The unassuming Jensen always smiled. That he scored such a brilliant goal in the 1992 Euro Final against Germany only added to the legend.

His transfer to Arsenal will also be remembered in the history books as one of the moves which brought the shock downfall of Highbury manager George Graham for accepting cash from agent Rune Hauge.

After leaving England, Jensen went back to Brondby who he has helped to win two successive League titles, and is hoping for a third this summer to cap a distinguished playing career.

The move to Herfolge, where he will be chief coach, is a risky one, both for the man and the club. Jensen has no coaching pedigree, and the club survive on far less cash than all their competitors in the Superliga. But there is also a sense that Jensen and Herfolge are temperamentally suited; ugly ducklings of the game who have prospered and thrived on hard work, positive spirit and the application of talent.

Two days after the announcement of Jensen's switch, another great Dane, Morten Olsen, lost his job as coach at Ajax for failure in the Champions League and a poor start in Holland. Could he, like Brian Laudrup and maybe Peter Schmeichel, also be coming back to Denmark? Through the winter snows, there should be a keen sense of anticipation among Danish football supporters.

Jim Holden

FINLAND

Talent moves next door to Norway

FINNISH players are treating neighbouring Norway like a new El Dorado, with several top players moving to clubs 'next door'.

HJK Helsinki lost midfielder Aki Riihilahti to Valerenga, striker Mikaa Kottila to Brann and midfielder Jarko Wiss to Molde. Brann also snapped up sweeper Harri Ylonen from champions Haka and MyPa playmaker Sami Mahlio is going to Odd Skien.

"In Norway a player can earn five times what he gets in Finland," said Wiss. "Besides, the standard of play is higher and scouts – particularly from English clubs – often go to watch players."

HJK, who ran out of steam in their final Champions League group game, against Kaiserslautern, tried to reverse the trend by luring Russian veteran Alexei Yeremenko from Norway's Tromso. They also hope to sign Juha Riippa from FC Jazz, stopper Toni Kuivasto from MyPa, and Turkish striker Sukry Uzuner from relegated FinnPa.

Matti Hiukka, last season's top scorer, has moved from Rovaniemi to HJK's ambitious local rivals, PK-35.

Pentti Hietanen

NORWAY

The future is bright

ALTHOUGH Rosenborg failed to qualify for the quarter-finals of the Champions League, because of their final group defeat against Juventus in Turin, the state of Norwegian football must be rated as very good.

The domestic season had finished more than a month earlier, and the Rosenborg players suffered from lack of competitive games. The 2-0 defeat by Juventus meant that Rosenborg finished equal on points with the Italians and Galatasaray but had to bow out of the competition.

The match also was coach Trond Sollied's farewell to the club. They wanted to keep him in partnership with Nils Arne Eggen, but Sollied was not satisfied with playing second fiddle to his former mentor and decided to try his luck with Belgian club Gent.

Valerenga, the only Norwegian club remaining in European competitions, will face tough opponents in the quarter-finals of the Cup-winners Cup, having drawn Chelsea. Coach Lars Tjernaas, however, relishes the challenge: "Remember that Chelsea had problems against two other Scandinavian teams in previous rounds of the competition, and I doubt whether Chelsea will be harder for us than Besiktas were."

After his period as consultant to the club, Egil Olsen will start his three-year period as coach this month and should have enough time to prepare the players for this major encounter.

Since his arrival earlier this autumn, fortunes have taken a turn for the better and optimism is high at the Oslo club.

The expected exodus of Norwegian players to foreign clubs did not happen when the domestic season finished. Many players have been on trial in different countries but very few have signed. This is partly due to the fact that the wages the players are offered at home have increased dramstically. Also, being with a foreign club where you are not getting first-team football is a negative factor for most players.

Former national captain Rune Bratseth hit the headlines with a scathing attack on foreign professionals. "Most of the professional players abroad are too lazy. They should be thinking more about what to do in life when their footballing careers are over and when they come home," said Bratseth, now a director of Rosenborg.

Sigurd Odegaard

SWEDEN

Baxter tells of his problems at AIK

THE atmosphere at champion club AIK has been edgy in recent weeks, with coach Stuart Baxter criticising the set-up and energetic general manager Stefan Soderberg in public.

"AIK are seen as a sleeping giant,

AIK blues...Soderberg (left) and Baxter

but at times I wonder whether we are running a professional club or just another amateur outfit," says Baxter. "I'm interested only in a pro set-up."

Baxter has been critical of the club's training facilities and is said to be unhappy with some of the transfer deals conducted by Soderberg, but he plans to stay for at least another season.

AIK's biggest deal during the close season so far was the signing of midfielder Martin Aslund, recently capped by Sweden, from Norrkoping. This was a dream move for Aslund, whose father played for AIK.

Halmstad seem unlikely to be able to prevent star striker Mats Lilienberg from moving to Malmo. This means that the three stars of the 1997 title-winning team will have left, Jesper Mattson having gone to Nottingham Forest and Freddie Ljungberg to Arsenal.

Pentti Hietanen

GREECE

Violence mars the Olympiakos triumph

OLYMPIAKOS have reached their highest point in European competition history, while their great rivals in the Greek First Division, Panathinaikos, are going through one of their worst crises in years.

With three wins, two draws and one defeat, Olympiakos finished on top of their group in the Champions League and will face Juventus in the quarter-finals.

Olympiakos also top the Greek table, are hoping to repeat their championship of last year, and were heartened by a 4-2 come-from-behind victory at home against Panathinaikos.

The match was marred by violence between fans and police. One police motorcycle was firebombed and its rider slightly injured, while several coaches and cars were stoned and three train carriages damaged. Hundreds of plastic seats at the Athens Olympic Stadium were torn up and hurled at police.

Panathinaikos, after reaching the semi-finals of the Champions League in 1996, have had problems ever since. From that successful team, 11 players are no longer on the books.

Tragedy struck at the 3-1 home defeat by Arsenal in their last Champions League contest when a 16-year-old fan, Costas Tsarkos, fell 20 metres to his death from the stands to the stadium's courtyard.

Lou Economopoulos

TURKEY

Terim says sorry to the fans

GALATASARAY coach Fatih Terim took the unusual step of apologising to supporters after the team had wasted a golden chance of getting to the last eight of the Champions League.

Gala went to Spain to face Athletic Bilbao in their last group match without three key players, suspended strikers Hakan Sukur and Hakan Unsal and injured midfielder Tugay Kerimoglu.

Even so, as leaders of their qualifying group they should have won against a team with no hope of qualifying, but they lost by the only goal and left their hopes buried in the Bilbao mud.

Terim blamed the tension felt by the players, as well as the absence of the three stars, for the defeat. Many people also felt that FIFA's postponement of the earlier game, against Juventus, had been unwise.

The massively exaggerated safety measures, and the turning of Istanbul into a city virtually under siege, all for one soccer match, created an awful atmosphere.

We now wait to see whether Galatasaray can recover from their enormous disappointment and qualify for the Champions League yet again.

They trail Besiktas, the unbeaten leaders, by seven points with two games in hand – and one of them is against Besiktas.

Trabzonspor and Samsunspor were surprisingly eliminated from the Turkish Cup. Gaziantepspor lost only 5-4 in Trabzon, where few visitors do well, and won the home leg 3-1, while Erzurumspor beat Samsunspor 4-3 over the two legs.

Hasan Cemali

MALTA

Valletta on course

VALLETTA saw in the New Year at the top of the table and seem destined for their third consecutive title.

Their 4-1 defeat of Floriana – who led at half-time – rocketed them to a nine-point margin over Birkirkara.

New Czech striker Mraz has given the champions a boost. Their overall strength is clearly overwhelming.

Birkirkara's hopes of getting closer to the leaders disappeared when they were held to a 1-1 draw by a depleted Hibernians side. Birkirkara, with a game in hand, need to rekindle the sort of form which almost took them to the title last season.

Hamrun's glory days seem to be over, and the club look doomed to the drop.

Domenico Aquilina

ALBANIA

Ballshi boys make their mark

NEWCOMERS Bylis Ballshi from the provincial town of Ballshi – population 5,000 – were keeping step with FC Tirana in the League race.

After 14 games both had 29 points and a goal difference of plus 14.

Bylis Ballshi are hoping to win the championship at the third attempt. When promoted for the first time in 1995-96, they won 26 and drew four, scoring 121 goals to 14!

Since then their ambitious board of directors have recruited several more players, and four of the present squad – goalkeeper Shehi, defenders Ahmataj and Bendo, and striker Asilani – are in the national Under-21 team.

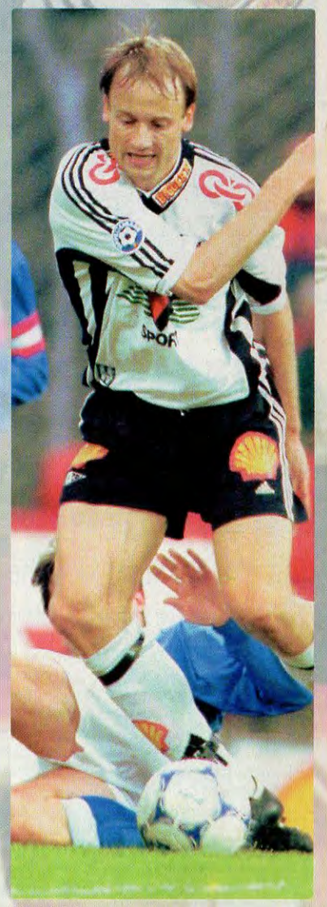
FK Lushnja also are doing well, and are only one point behind the top two.

Gezim Nushi

Apology...Fatih Terim

Pro-file Sigurd Rushfeldt

Norway's master marksman



ALTHOUGH Rosenborg Trondheim's flickering hopes of reaching the last eight of the Champions League were snuffed out by defeat against Juventus in Turin, 1998 was a year to savour for that prolific marksman, Sigurd Rushfeldt.

To put it mildly, Rushfeldt was on a roll all year long. How else to describe his feat of scoring 27 Norwegian championship goals, to become his country's top scorer for the second season in succession – he managed 25 in 1997 – and the half-dozen in Europe, including a brilliant hat-trick in the 3-0 home win over Galatasaray?

Rosenborg have won the championship for seven successive years, with their dynasty built largely on solid teamwork. Yet it is nearly impossible to avoid singling out Rushfeldt's contribution since he joined the club from Tromso early in 1997.

After all, he accounted for almost a third of their total goals in 1998, and when, earlier in the season, the upstarts from Molde looked likely to end Rosenborg's dominance, Rushfeldt's eye for space and his precision finishing kept his side ahead.

Rune Bratseth, a former national team skipper, is now a director at Rosenborg, and he says: "Sigurd is sharp in the box, courageous, a good runner off the ball, and always cool when it comes to finishing. You have to respect a player who scores goals in such quantities.

"But despite his record, he is not given the credit he deserves. Critics seem to prefer to focus on the shots and headers that do not end up in the net rather than the many that do. No striker hits the target every time, and to call Sigurd wasteful is much too harsh."

The Norwegian season ended in late October with Rushfeldt leading the race for the Golden Shoe, the annual award for Europe's top scorer, even though he surprisingly has not managed a goal in eight international appearances.

He is likely to be overhauled between now and May by a striker playing in one of the major leagues, and by the time the prize is handed out, he could well be with another club in another country. Rushfeldt's exploits have not gone unnoticed, and with Rosenborg out of the Champions League the way is clear for him to join the growing exodus from Rosenborg to more crowded arenas.

The switch from Trondheim to the English Premier League has become an annual rite of passage for many of Rushfeldt's former team-mates: Heggem, Leonhardsen, Bjornebye, Kvarme, Iversen and Soltvedt have all set up home in England, though not all have been successful.

For the time being, Sigurd Rushfeldt is Rosenborg's man of the moment. The question is, though, for how much longer?

Nick Bidwell

Club Rosenborg Trondheim
Country Norway
Born December 11, 1972, in Tromso
Previous club Tromso IL
International debut February 1994, v Denmark
International caps 8 (0 goals)
Honours Norwegian League 1997, 1998

Kickstart...Rebrov scores at Wembley to get Kyiv's show on the road

Success all the way

But now Dynamo face the big problem

KYIV DYNAMO ended their most successful year since the break-up of the old Soviet Union by gaining a place in the Champions League quarter-finals and the Ukrainian Cup semi-finals, plus top spot in the Ukrainian League. Their success also ensured that there will be two places for Ukraine in next season's Champions League preliminaries, instead of the previous one.

If one goal can be said to have made all the difference, it was the one scored by Serhii Rebrov in the closing seconds against Arsenal at Wembley. Dynamo had taken only one point from their first two European games, but the draw in London was followed by home wins in the return with Arsenal and against Panathinaikos, and qualification was completed with a memorable 3-1 away victory over Lens.

Dynamo supporters have plenty of happy memories to keep them warm during the long winter. In February their club won the CIS Champions Cup, beating Moscow Spartak 1-0 in the Final. In July they beat city rivals ZSCA 2-1 in the Ukraine Cup Final. In November Dynamo beat Metalist 5-1 on aggregate to reach this season's Ukraine Cup semi-finals. And in December they went three points clear in the domestic League with a 6-2 defeat of Metalurg Zaporizha in their final match before the winter break.

During the 12 months Dynamo lost only four matches – 3-2 to Dnpro in the League, 4-1 to Juventus in last season's Champions League, and 1-0 to Sparta Prague and 2-1 to Panathinaikos in the same competition this season.

In addition, Dynamo provided most of the players for the national squad, who beat Russia 3-2, Andorra 2-0 and Armenia 2-0 in Euro 2000 qualifying games.

Success, of course, brings problems. Should the club cash in on their assets by selling up to half a dozen of their stars during the Ukrainian close season, or should they hold on to them at least until their fate in Europe is known?

If the former course is followed, Dynamo almost certainly will lose their best chance yet of winning the Champions League. If the latter, values are likely to drop – unless further victories are achieved in Europe, starting with the quarter-final against the holders, Real Madrid, in which case the sky will be the limit.

Coach Valerii Lobanovskyi is the only one who can decide. But he knows only too well that in 1990 the sale of players such as Zavarov, Protasov, Kuznetsov and Mikhailichenko eventually led him to leave the club for the United Arab Emirates.

He would be unlikely to leave again, having now become an extremely powerful figure in Ukrainian football as co-ordinator of the national squads at all levels. He is now one of the so-called Big Three, with Prime Minister Valeriy Pustovoitenko (also president of the Football Federation) and Grygory Surkis, president of the Football League. Surkis resigned as Dynamo president earlier this year, on his election to parliament, and handed over presidential power to his younger brother Igor, although he retains an honorary position at the club.

● Dynamo face Zirka, 13th of the 16 top flight clubs, in one Cup semi-final, while Shakhtar (2nd) play Karpaty (3rd).

Oleg Zadernovsky

RUSSIA

Koloskov still in power

POOR Anatoli Byshovets. He was fired less than six months after being appointed national coach. And he must be comparing his position with that of Vyacheslav 'The Unsinkable' Koloskov, who has been re-elected president of the Russian Football Union.

Byshovets did not want the national job and had to be persuaded to take it, with a contract lasting until 2002. Six defeats later he was out.

There had been a case for him to stay – after all, who else is there with the ability to do such a massive job? – but there had been a case, too, for Koloskov to go.

He, after all, was the man above the man in charge of the team, and had been subject to massive criticism as a result of the failure to qualify for France 98.

Yet Koloskov won overwhelming support at the RFU conference, easily beating League president Nikolai Tolstykh and Moscow Olympic Arena director Vladimir Aleshin. So now, despite all the allegations – mismanagement being perhaps the least of them – he stays in the job for another five years.

Six and out...Anatoli Byshovets

The traditional CIS Cup indoor tournament takes place in Moscow in late January, between teams from all the former Soviet republics. Players taking part include Sergei Yuran, who has rejoined Moscow Spartak from German club Bochum.

Victor Gusev

POLAND

Miroslaw tops the poll at last

EXPERIENCED forward Miroslaw Trzeciak, who plays for Osasuna in Spain, has been named Poland's Footballer of the Year by the magazine *Pilka Nozna*.

Trzeciak started his career with amateurs Gwardia Koszalin before joining Lech Poznan. He won three League titles with them and later spent a few months with Young Boys in the Swiss League.

After returning home Trzeciak rejoined Lech before going to LKS Lodz. He was League top scorer with 18 goals in 1997, and helped LKS to win the championship. On his 30th birthday, April 11, he scored all the goals in a 3-0 victory away to second-placed Polonia Warsaw.

Trzeciak made his international debut against Sweden in 1991, but then did not feature for six years. Now he is the key player in the national side.

Tomasz Frankowski of Wisla Krakow was named Discovery of the Year – despite the fact he is 24 and has been a professional with six clubs, two in Poland, three in France and one in Japan.

Janusz Wojcik, 45, was voted Manager of the Year. He took Poland to Olympic silver in 1992 and Legia Warsaw to the Polish championship in 1993. He later handled the UAE Olympic squad and then replaced Antoni Piechniczek as coach of the Polish national team.

Dariusz Kurowski

BULGARIA

Cup progresses but crowds are low

THE RETURN legs to decide the Cup quarter-finalists rounded off the first half of the season.

There were few surprises, and no lower division club had made it to the last 16, but Levski were unexpectedly eliminated by Slavia after recording a 2-0 home win in the first leg. Slavia turned things round with a 3-0 win. Lok joined them in the next round after winning both matches against Botev Plovdiv.

CSKA managed to inch past Septemvri by a golden goal in extra time, after losing a two-goal lead from leg one. Spartak Varna and Minior of Pernik both hit six after drawing their respective first legs in Shumen. League leaders Lovech comfortably qualified at the expense of Metalurg Pernik, while Pirin and Levski Kustendil make up the numbers.

Public interest in both Cup and League remains modest, and attendances are low.

Bob Vaughan

CZECH REPUBLIC

Sparta on high

SPARTA went into the winter break on top of the table after a home win over 10th-placed Hradec Kralove, who are among several teams in trouble in the lower half of the division.

Two Dukla wins, from a rearranged match with Viktoria Plzen and against Slovan Liberec in the last round of the autumn campaign, put them up a place and sent Karvina to the bottom.

Surprise packets FK Teplice dropped a point to Drnovice in the penultimate round, which cost them the leadership. Drnovice made it 2-2 with a goal deep into stoppage time, referee Pavlin Jirku being accused by Teplice coach Josef Pesice of adding seven minutes when he had indicated there would be three.

Teplice's second spot, after near

relegation last season, is far more than Pesice or anyone could have expected. The progress made by the villagers of Blsany is equally remarkable.

No sooner had soccer shut down than Zizkov coach Julius Bielik left for Jablonec, neighbours as well as rivals.

The Player of the Year award went to Lazio's Pavel Nedved, second place to Vladimir Smicer (Lens) and third to Patrik Berger (Liverpool). The poll was conducted among 81 journalists.

Bob Vaughan

YUGOSLAVIA

Partizan beat their 52-year record

THE FIRST stage of the championship was easily won by Partizan Belgrade, with an impressive 16 victories and one draw in 17 matches. With 15 consecutive wins, Partizan beat the Yugoslav record of 11 which they had set back in 1946.

In addition, Partizan achieved some success in the Cup-winners Cup by eliminating Newcastle. In the second round they went out to Lazio but only by 3-2 on aggregate.

The national team were the last to begin their Euro 2000 qualifiers, recording a 1-0 home victory against the group leaders, the Republic of Ireland.

New national coach Milan Zivadinovic selected most of the team who reached the last 16 at France 98, and their rather disappointing performance led to discussions in the media about whether 33-year-old captain Dragan Stojkovic should retire from international football.

He had arrived from playing for Nagoya in Japan barely 48 hours before the game, and was substituted at half-time.

Vladimir Novak

HUNGARY

MTK well clear

MTK WERE six points ahead at the season's halfway mark, after taking 41 points from 17 matches.

FC ETO were second, a point ahead of the surprisingly successful Diosgyoen.

Seventh, eighth and ninth are unexpectedly poor placings for capital city trio Ferencvaros, champions Ujpest and Vasas. 'Fradi' ended the year with a 2-2 draw in Kispest against a still sluggish Honved, while Vasas were narrowly defeating Videoton and Ujpest losing narrowly in Agard to Gazszen FC.

The national team have much to do in 1999. They will be in training camp before the visit of Liechtenstein in March for a Euro qualifier, which will be followed three days later by a tricky visit to Bratislava for the clash with the Slovaks.

Bob Vaughan

Close call...Partizan v Lazio

ROMANIA

Steaua on the slide

THE CHAMPIONSHIP is up for grabs, with Steaua – for once – not among those challenging for the trophy.

They trail Dinamo and Rapid by 10 points, all three Bucharest rivals having won in the 16th round of matches. National, fourth, complete a capital city block at the top, and there appears little chance of the title going elsewhere.

One relegation place also looks decided, with Foresta Falticeni averaging only about a point every three outings.

Cup football made a welcome break just before the winter shutdown, but the return legs brought no surprises. Steaua finished off Ploiesti 6-2 on aggregate, though Rapid only just got past Bistrita, 3-2. The sole Third Division side left, Timisoara, lost 2-0 away to Dinamo after a plucky 1-1 draw at home, and Bacau provide the only non-Bucharest semi-finalists, having overcome Otelul Galati.

Bob Vaughan

SLOVAKIA

Galis takes charge

WHILE Trnava go into the break as the favourites for the championship, their coach, Dusan Galis, puts his shoulder to the wheel in a new job.

A successor was needed to replace national coach Jozef Jankech, who did a reasonable job in following Jozef Venglos, and there was no obvious choice available. A year or so ago Karol Pecze, a former coach to the Under-21 selection, would have been ideal, but he is currently doing good work getting Genclerbirligi up the Turkish table.

A choice had to be made before the spring Euro 2000 qualifiers, away to Romania and home to Hungary in Bratislava, where Galis took Slovan to the first three titles in the Slovak League.

He probably would not be everyone's choice and has a reputation for being a tough man to play for. As a player he was a fringe member of the Czechoslovakia side who won the European Championship in 1976, and his coaching record is not bad either.

His contract runs until the start of next year and will almost certainly be extended to summer 2000 if he can work wonders and guide Slovakia to the finals.

Bob Vaughan

Pro-file Patrica Ognjenovic

Red Star Belgrade's boy wonder

YUGOSLAVIA and Red Star Belgrade starlet Patrica Ognjenovic is not only influential on the field of play – he also has his uses away from the roar of the crowds.

A few weeks ago, a friend of his was stopped by traffic police in Belgrade and was unable to produce the necessary documentation.

A fine looked imminent until the sight of Ognjenovic in the passenger seat resolved the situation. The cop – a Red Star fan – was happy to substitute a heart-to-heart on football for the possible punishment.

At least the policeman got the car to stop.

Ever since Ognjenovic broke into the first team as a teenager in 1994-95, he has frustrated defenders anxious to shackle him by being invariably one step ahead of them, courtesy of his cunning, pace and outstanding technique.

His parents are teachers, and he has learned quickly, developing into the hottest property in the Yugoslav League today, with Barcelona and Real Madrid among others hovering in the hope of securing his future signature.

Milan Milanjic, the one-time Red Star and national coach, and now president of the Yugoslav federation, says: "It is this country's good fortune that the well of players with wonderful individual ability has never run dry.

"Ognjenovic is probably the most gifted of the new generation. The future belongs to him. He's still young and you don't have to be a genius to predict he will have a minimum of a decade of success.

"First, he is so very quick. In the modern game, that's a huge plus. Second, he's a player of incredible natural attacking instincts. He's a natural, an original. He can create, he can score, he poses a lot of problems for defenders."

Unfortunately, Milanjic is no longer in charge of the national squad. And, despite making three promising appearances as a substitute at France 98, and being in good nick for Red Star of late, Ognjenovic has been surprisingly ignored this season by the new national boss, Milan Zivadinovic.

Perhaps the boy wonder is paying the price for his club's disappointing run this season – a poor third at halfway and trailing arch-rivals Partizan Belgrade by 10 points.

Or is it because the 21-year-old has still to complete his footballing education with a move to a more high profile league in western Europe?

Versatility is another possible obstacle. Should he be used on the left wing, or through the middle as half of a strikeforce? "I don't mind where I play for my country," he says. "All you can ask is to be involved.

"Being in France for the World Cup last summer was a marvellous experience, and I'm dying for more.

"When I get another chance it will be up to me to grab it."

Nick Bidwell

Club Red Star Belgrade
Country Yugoslavia
Born December 24, 1977, in Gosa
Previous club Mladost Gosa
International debut November 1995, v Mexico
International caps 5 (0 goals)
Honours Yugoslav League 1995; Yugoslav Cup 1995, 1996, 1997

The power of television...Xuxa's popularity led to the rescheduling of the national championship decider

Note the name: Xuxa

BRAZIL

She's the one running football in Brazil, says Brian Homewood

THE QUEEN of children's television in Brazil is a 35-year-old called Xuxa. She has released a dozen CDs, shocked more discerning parents with the brainless content and blatant commercialism of her programmes, amassed a fortune of £20million and showered herself with publicity contracts.

There is no escaping this woman. Her face adorns magazine covers, she is never out of the gossip columns, and when she became pregnant nine months ago, Brazilians were treated to day-by-day progress reports. She endorses more than 150 products, many of which are plugged during the course of her programmes. Now, it appears, she also runs Brazilian football.

Unbelievably, the third and deciding leg of the national championship Final was moved to a Wednesday afternoon to avoid clashing with Xuxa's Christmas special in the evening, when the game was due to be played.

The original time and date for the match, between Cruzeiro and Corinthians, had been announced a month earlier but Globo TV took three weeks to realise that it would clash with their prized programme. Once they woke up to this, however, they wasted no time in wielding their considerable influence behind the scenes, and everyone else was forced to fit in.

The CBF tried to move the game to the following Sunday, but the clubs wanted to get it out of the way before Christmas.

The first leg had been played before Xuxa, the clubs and the CBF agreed on the dates for the third, and, to add to the chaos, the venues for the second and third legs also went undecided.

Championship rules dictated the games had to be played in a stadium with a 50,000-plus capacity but Morumbi, the only arena of that size in Sao Paulo – Corinthians' home city – was partially closed for repairs. The provincial towns of Ribeirao Preto and Sao Jose do Rio Preto had been mentioned as alternative venues, but Corinthians wanted to stay in Sao Paulo and threatened not to travel for the first leg in Belo Horizonte, Cruzeiro's base, unless it was first agreed they could use the 37,000-capacity Pacaembu.

After much bickering, the clubs agreed to stage the game at Morumbi, where the capacity was slashed from 80,000 to 53,000 because of the construction work.

The championship, as usual, had been plagued by changes in dates. An entire round of fixtures had to be moved from a Sunday to a Saturday after the CBF realised the original date coincided with general elections – which had been decided two years before. The final round of first-stage matches was switched three times and ended up being played on a Thursday afternoon.

Corinthians, built around Paraguay's Carlos Gamarra and Colombian Fredy Rincon, overcame Santos in the semi-finals thanks to their better record earlier in the tournament. Each team had won one game in the three-leg semi-final, and the third ended 1-1, but Corinthians went through to the Final because they had won the 24-team first stage.

Pele's former club usually have the sympathy of most neutrals but on this occasion few tears were shed when they were knocked out. Under former Brazil goalkeeper Emerson Leao, who spends much of his time on the touchline ranting at referees, Santos turned into one of the most unpleasant teams in the tournament. Their astonishing average of 31 fouls per game speaks for itself.

In the second leg against Corinthians, midfielder Narciso was sent off for a truly awful lunge at Marcelinho Carioca. In the third leg, Viola, the competition's top scorer with 21 goals, had to be led off the field by police after being shown the red card for dissent. Viola initially refused to leave, preferring to square up to referee Sidrack Marinho. The following scenes were typically comical. Three officers went on the field but limited themselves to watching the row, which by now involved all the Santos team. Marinho yelled at them to remove Viola. So they duly marched him off, but the striker slipped their attentions and ran back on again for another bout of whingeing.

In the other semi-final, Portuguesa fell at the last again as Cruzeiro beat them by six points to three. Portuguesa had been minutes from the 1996 title before losing to Gremio. Last year, they were knocked out in the semi-final group stage. And in this year's Paulista championship, Corinthians eliminated them with a controversial penalty in the second leg of their semi-final.

Cruzeiro, where former internationals Valdo and Muller were in fine fettle, finished seventh in the first stage but just got better as the championship rolled on.

URUGUAY

Rentistas miss their last chance

THE TWO big Montevideo clubs, Penarol and Nacional, continue to dominate the First Division, although this season at least there was some slight diversion.

A small club, Rentistas, led the closing championship with one match to go, and having conceded just one goal in 10 games goalkeeper Alvaro Nunez was closing in on the national unbeaten record held for years by Ladislao Mazurkiewicz of Penarol.

But on the last day, Rentistas surprisingly lost 2-0 to another small outfit, Danubio, Nunez fell 39 minutes short of the record and everything returned to normal. Nacional jumped into first place to take the closing title and, because they had won the opening event, became automatic champions.

Penarol had won the title in the previous five years, but this season they ended up with nothing. They even failed to win a play-off between the next four highest points- winners to accompany Nacional into the Libertadores Cup.

In addition, Penarol failed to win a match in the new Mercosur Cup, and to top it all they lost their derby matches against Nacional, 3-2 and 4-2, having previously won eight in succession.

Club officials will tell you that injuries to players during the season made their task just too difficult, in particular that suffered by Uruguayan international striker Gabriel Cedres. He cost the club £800,000, crashed into a goalpost in his third game and could not play again for the rest of the season.

Fans will tell you of a Montevideo witch-doctor, a Penarol fan who for years had been sticking pins into newspaper photos of Nacional players. Early in the season he was jailed for practising medicine illegally. Although some say he continued his voodoo-style habits in jail, the fans claim they did not work when he was away from his home.

Victory has not come cheap for Nacional. Right after they won the title, coach Hugo De Leon left. He did not have a Uruguayan coaching certificate and although he had been given permission, temporarily, to continue in his role, a strike by coaches towards the end of the season was lifted only when the FA decided not to let anyone coach in the country without the required qualification.

Nacional also finished the season with debts of £5.3million, which may force them to sell leading players.

When even the champions have financial problems, one can imagine the state of other clubs. First Division side Rampla Juniors, for example, are looking for investors to enable them to carry on. One of their creditors, the agent Paco Casal, is owed more than £300,000, they have not paid their players for six months, and rules state that a club cannot start the season if they owe players money.

Casal is well liked by clubs and players, but not so much by the FA, who would rather do without him. The agent, a former, not very successful player, decided to stay in football when he retired at the age of 27. There is a story that when he was only 10 and a ballboy at a Libertadores Cup match at Montevideo's Centenario Stadium, he approached the visiting Estudiantes de La Plata centre-half Carlos Bilardo before the game and offered to return the ball quickly or slowly, as he required, if Bilardo gave him his shirt afterwards.

That was said to have been Casal's first business deal. Now he is a millionaire, and he may well help to save Uruguayan soccer financially. With former internationals Enzo Francescoli and Nelson Gutierrez as partners, he is offering the Uruguayan FA £3.1m a year for TV rights of games for 10 years.

There are two other encouraging items on the Uruguayan soccer scene. Next season will be the first time that a team from outside Montevideo play in the First Division. Frontera, from Rivera on the border with Brazil, will give a slightly more national look to the championship race.

The second matter concerns Rentistas' Brazilian, Rafael Rafatti. When he tested positive for drugs, it was the first case of its kind in Uruguay, but although the player was provisionally suspended, the ban was expected to be lifted. It transpired that the drug was taken to relieve asthma, although he did not advise officials of this before the match.

Eric Weil

Early injury...Penarol's Gabriel Cedres

Titled...Olimpia coach Luis Cubilla

PARAGUAY

The Olimpia-Cerro show goes on

OLIMPIA beat Cerro Porteno 5-3 on aggregate in the play-off for the title. So the two clubs will yet again represent Paraguay in the Libertadores Cup – Olimpia for the 12th year running, Cerro for the ninth.

Uruguayan coach Luis Cubilla took Olimpia to another title in his fourth spell with the club, to make his record nine domestic titles and six international cups (Libertadores 2, Intercontinental, Inter-American, Super Cup and Recopa).

Carlos Kiese, a former Paraguay international, had to coach Cerro from the stands for a large part of the season because the FA suspended him after his frequent dismissals for arguing with referees. He has now signed a lucrative contract with Mexico's America.

Cerro were trying to sign Uruguayan coach Jorge Fosatti to replace him. He had been with the club the previous year.

An outstanding newcomer this season was 17-year-old Olimpia striker Roque Santa Cruz. At the other end of the scale there was former international Julio Cesar Romero, 'Romerito', who is still playing in the First Division (for Sportivo Luqueno) at the age of 41.

Eric Weil

ARGENTINA

Undefeated Boca take opening title

BOCA JUNIORS finished the National 'A' Division opening title as undefeated champions – only the fifth time this has happened. They had a nine-point lead over Gimnasia y Esgrima de La Plata, while Martin Palermo's 20 goals was the highest total in a one-round (19 games) championship, which began in 1991.

Boca finished with a 13-6-0 record and did better away than at home. One of their six draws was 0-0 against eternal rivals River Plate, who sold some key players and finished a lowly 15th.

One of Esgrima de La Plata's idols, former international striker Alberto Marcico, has retired after playing a total of 595 games in Argentina and France, during which he scored 130 goals.

Last season's closing championship winners, Velez Sarsfield, finished only 11th. Coach Eduardo Solari resigned before the season ended and was replaced by Eduardo Manera.

Third-placed Racing Club had one of their best seasons for a while, but faced a winding-up order in respect of their debts, which total £22m, though there are reports that they owe twice as much.

Coach Angel Cappa resigned and was replaced by two former players, Humberto Maschio and Gustavo Costas. So Racing have had 69 coaches since they last won a First Division title, in 1966.

Eric Weil

IN BRIEF

Ten points to spare, but no title

DEPORTIVO CALI won their seventh **COLOMBIAN** title – their first in 22 years – by beating Once Caldas in the play-off Final. Deportivo won the first leg 4-0 and drew the second 0-0.

Victor Bonilla scored three in the first leg and finished as top scorer overall with 37 goals, followed by Sergio Galvan of Once Caldas with 29.

Once Caldas led the 50-match regular championship all the way to win it by a 10-point margin. The team, where future Colombian national team coach Javier Alvarez had done wonders, have won the title only once, 48 years ago.

Deportivo Cali have outstanding players in international goalkeeper Rafael Dudamel and midfielder Arley Betancur, as well as Bonilla.

IN CHILE... Colo Colo won the title for the 22nd time and the third year running, but only by a point from Universidad de Chile, who were unbeaten in their last 15 games.

Defender Francisco Rojas – who has had an outstanding season – scored the title clincher on the last day, six minutes from the end of the game against Iquique, which ended 2-1.

The triumph was especially significant for Paraguayan coach Gustavo Benitez, because it was achieved with many young and inexperienced players, the debt-riddled club having been forced to sell several key men.

Colo Colo had a sound defence – conceding only 19 goals in the 30 games – with goalkeeper Marceloa Ramirez and Pedro Reyes outstanding, as well as Rojas, and a good midfield with Argentinian captain Marcelo Espina and Jose Sierra (as well as Emerson until his transfer).

The two Universidads, Catolica and Chile, reached the play-off Final to decide the other Libertadores Cup team.

Uruguayan-born Nelson Acosta renewed his national team coaching contract until the 2002 World Cup.

IN BOLIVIA... Blooming from Santa Cruz won the championship for the first time since 1984. Jorge Wilsterman, of Cochabamba, had won the opening championship, and the closing event depended on their match with Blooming on the final day, which the latter won 1-0. If it had gone the other way, Wilsterman would have been automatic champions, having won both tournaments.

IN PERU... Sport Boys led the closing championship most of the way but were caught on the last day by Sporting Cristal and Alianza Lima, who both finished with a better and identical goal difference. Sporting Cristal won the play-off 1-0 to reach a title decider with opening champions Universitario. Sporting Cristal won the first leg 2-1.

IN VENEZUELA... Union Atletica Tachira clinched first place in the opening championship with one game to go.

Struggling Mineros de Guyana have signed up former Argentina star Mario Kempes as coach.

IN ECUADOR... Liga Deportiva Universitaria de Quito won the closing championship and will play opening championship winners Emelec for the title. Both qualify for the Libertadores Cup.

Defending champions Barcelona lost out on the closing championship by a point and their deep financial troubles continue. Phone lines have been cut off and players and staff have not been paid.

Eric Weil

Men in the news

Ruggeri returns as coach

OSCAR RUGGERI, Argentina's most-capped player, has returned to San Lorenzo, the club where he formerly played, as coach. This follows the resignation of Alfio Basile.

Hugo Gatti, the keeper whose last club was Boca Juniors, returned to play for them at the age of 54, in a friendly against Universidad Catolica (Chile) as part of Boca's title celebrations. He did not have much to do. Boca won 5-0.

Colombia goalkeeper Farid Mondragon has moved from Independiente (Argentina) to Zaragoza (Spain).

New role...Oscar Ruggeri

Heading for victory...DC United beat Vasco da Gama 2-1 on aggregate in the InterAmerican Cup

DC? OK – but ESPN is NBG

Paul Gardner unravels the initials

UNITED STATES

BRUCE ARENA's last game in charge of Washington DC United, just before he took over as head coach of the US national team, produced a disappointing result. DC, playing in the MLS Cup 98 and looking to win a third straight championship, went down 2-0 to Chicago Fire.

So how come Arena called 1998 the "greatest season" in DC's three-year history? Well, the Final was not quite Arena's last game with DC. The last MLS game, yes, but there was some unfinished business – the InterAmerican Cup.

This pits the South American champions (winners of the Libertadores Cup) against the CONCACAF champions and is usually called the Copa Interamericana – logically enough, because the finalists are usually from Spanish-speaking countries in Central or South America. Previous winners include River Plate, Velez Sarsfield, Colo Colo, Nacional Medellin, Independiente and Mexico's Club America.

This year was a bit different, with Portuguese-speaking Vasco da Gama against English-speaking DC United. Different, too, in that both legs were played in the USA.

Vasco – on their way to Tokyo for the World Club Cup Final against Real Madrid – stopped in DC and beat United 1-0. No surprise there, but it was a heady night for DC and the fans (26,000 of them) as the game turned into an exciting and skilful display of open, attacking football. From both teams.

The goal came from young full-back Felipe, who produced a ferocious shot from 25 yards. "A great game for our fans, great for our players," said Arena. "We need more like that."

Vasco returned to the USA on their way home after losing to Real Madrid. This time the venue for what was technically Vasco's home tie was Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The crowd was only 7,200, but they showed plenty of enthusiasm and saw DC take the game 2-0 – and thus the trophy – with goals from Tony Sanneh and Eddie Pope.

No doubt Vasco were suffering a touch of jet-lag but they did not make excuses. Coach Antonio Lopes said: "United played well – the Cup is in good hands." Veteran midfielder Mauro Galvao was in no doubt that DC had created a piece of history: "If we had won, it wouldn't have been so important. But now the tournament becomes important. This is soccer – people always have to come to see what will happen."

"I can't believe we beat Vasco," said DC midfielder John Harkes. "This is something special, something we are going to carry with us for the rest of our lives."

So Arena's final game with DC – it was the real thing this time – had a happy ending. "This is a tremendous accomplishment for us," he said. "A lot of people, including myself, questioned whether we could pull this off. In three years we've come a long way, and in the next three years we can accomplish a lot more."

The game also featured an extra attraction for Arena. One of DC's best players – the fans were chanting his name as the game ended – was defender Carlos Llamosa, Colombia-born but a long-time resident of the USA. He recently obtained citizenship, so Arena can call him up to the US national team.

There was one aspect of DC's triumph that did not go down well in US soccer circles – particularly with MLS commissioner Doug Logan. Shortly after the Fort Lauderdale game, Logan presided over a call-in telephone press conference, in which he blasted certain sections of the media for ignoring DC's triumph.

While bad-mouthing the press has a habit of backfiring in this country, Logan's wrath with TV is understandable. In particular, he was miffed at the lack of attention from cable network ESPN. After all, ESPN and ESPN2 have made commitments to the League by broadcasting most regular-season games. But ESPN's decision to give the clubs air time does not seem to have been matched by a commitment to the game itself.

On the night of the game, ESPN ran a 75-minute sports programme that did not include highlights, nor even a mention of the score. "I'm absolutely disgusted by it," said Logan. "They had the footage, yet they covered three mediocre National Hockey League games, ad nauseam."

Tough ride for new coach

NEW Nigeria coach Thijs Libregts is learning quickly that he will not have an easy ride when handling the finicky international stars as they try to overcome the disappointment of the World Cup in France.

Already Libregts has been snubbed by some key players as he plans for the African Nations Cup qualifying campaign, and he has also told his new employers to get their house in order, or else.

Libregts, whose first match in charge will be against Burundi in late January, has been to Europe to try to talk to senior players, said to be disillusioned after the second-round defeat by Denmark which sent Nigeria out of the World Cup.

But Libregts failed to get to see Daniel Amokachi in Istanbul, where he plays for Turkish pacesetters Besiktas, and in Milan, where he had an appointment to meet Taribo West and Nwankwo Kanu, they did not turn up.

"When I arrived at Besiktas, I was told Amokachi was out of town but they gave me his mobile number and I arranged to have a discussion with him in the evening," said Libregts. "But later I tried to phone for about two hours and the mobile was switched off.

"After Istanbul I went to Milan, having sent a fax to tell Inter that I was coming. But there was no sign of West and Kanu. Maybe they didn't want to see me."

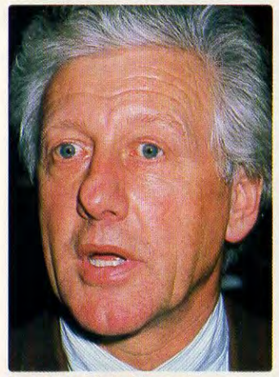
Allied to that, Sunday Oliseh has repeated his intention to concentrate on his club career with Ajax Amsterdam, although he told a BBC interviewer that he would not totally rule out a return to the Super Eagles if they needed him later.

Captain Uche Okechukwu already has announced his international retirement, saying it was time to blood younger players, and Austin Okocha is still in the 'dogbox' after missing October's opening African Nations Cup qualifier in Burkina Faso, even though he flew to Nigeria on the eve of the match.

Libregts had better luck in Spain with Finidi George of Real Betis, who pledged his willingness to play for Nigeria and was named in a preliminary group of 28 overseas players.

The squad also includes Celestine Babayaro, Victor Ikpeba and the much under-rated Mutiu Adepoju.

Libregts has warned the Nigerian Football Association that they have to change their attitudes and improve their organisational ability. "We have to learn to plan," he said.



Hard start...Thijs Libregts

Esperance in the record books

TUNISIAN club Esperance finally achieved their target of a first-ever clean sweep of all three of Africa's club competitions, but had to sweat all the way to win the African Cup-winners Cup Final against Primiero Agosto of Angola.

They were a goal down within two minutes of the first leg at home and even after coming back and winning 3-1, they still found their backs against the wall in the return.

With Primiero needing to win 2-0 for an away goals triumph, and a first African title for Angola, Esperance had a tough fight at a hostile Cidadela stadium.

Congolese import Nsilulu scored for Primiero in the 41st minute and then Esperance were reduced to 10 men.

But experienced keeper Chokri El Ouaer came up trumps with a penalty save that denied the Angolans a second goal. Then Sofiene Melliti scored a last-minute equaliser that gave Esperance a 4-2 aggregate victory.

The Tunisians are the first team to win the African Champions League, Cup-winners Cup and CAF Cup, and have done it all within the space of four years. They have also won the African Super Cup and can take that trophy again this month when they play ASEC Abidjan, winners of the African Champions League.

Mark Gleeson

IN BRIEF

Plateau's luck hits rock bottom

WEST AFRICA

WIKKI TOURISTS triumphed in **NIGERIA'S** FA Cup, beating Plateau United in a shootout after a 0-0 draw.

Plateau have one of the saddest Cup records in football history. This was their 11th defeat in the FA Cup Final, a tournament they have not won in its 47-year history.

CAF have banned referee Lucien Bouchardeau of **NIGER** from international duty for a year, after comments he made as a TV guest about fellow African referees.

O Mindelense have won the title in the **CAPE VERDE ISLANDS**.

CENTRAL AFRICA

BURUNDI won their delayed African Nations Cup qualifier against Senegal, with the only goal coming from Sutche Wembo in the 18th minute. They now head their group, above Nigeria and Burkina Faso.

FIFA have made a grant of almost £18,000 to **CONGO** to help finance their Under-23 team for the upcoming Olympic Games qualifiers.

In the **DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO**, Daring Club Motema Pembe have won the League, beating Vita Club 2-0 in the deciding game.

EAST AFRICA

US Zilimadju are the champions of the **COMORES ISLANDS**, the only African country yet to join FIFA.

Twelve clubs have entered the East and Central African Club Championship, which will take place in **UGANDA**. Among them are Somalia and Djibouti, who rarely appear in such tournaments.

NORTH AFRICA

Al Ahli head the table in **EGYPT** by three points from Zamalek.

Germany's Nurnberg are set to buy Mounir Boukadida, the 31-year-old **TUNISIAN** international central defender, from Etoile Sahel.

SOUTHERN AFRICA

Nchanga Rangers have won the title in **ZAMBIA**. They finished ahead of Kabwe Warriors and Nkana FC.

The **ANGOLAN** title was won by Primiero Agosto, who finished eight points clear of Petro Luanda. Newly-capped Betinho has gone to Hertha Berlin on trial, from Petro Atletico.

David Bright has returned to the national coaching job in **BOTSWANA** after the sacking of Michael Gaborone.

Clemens Westerhof is the new national coach of **ZIMBABWE**. He has signed a two-year contract. Highlanders have an eight-point lead over Zimbabwe Saints in the League. Highlanders are now coached by former international Rahman Gumbo.

MOZAMBIQUE have appointed Joao Albasine as national coach. He held the post in the late 1980s but has not worked in soccer for eight years. Previous coach Arnaldo Salvado is taking charge of the Under-23 team.

Maxaquene beat Ferroviario Maputo 1-0 in the Cup Final, with Macamito scoring five minutes from time.

At the halfway stage in the championship, the four zonal leaders are: Ferroviario Maputo, Costa do Sol, Chingale and Ferroviario Nacala.

Manning Rangers head the table in **SOUTH AFRICA** by seven points from Kaizer Chiefs.

Mark Gleeson

Pro-file Shabani Nonda

The 'new Weah' wowing France

A TEENAGE refugee from the war-ravaged conflict in Burundi is now being heralded as the 'new George Weah' in France. Shabani Nonda, a revelation at FC Zurich over the past two seasons, is now producing the goods for provincial upstarts Rennes, and fast earning himself a reputation in a high-profile league.

Nonda comes with impeccable credentials, having been named the best foreign player in Switzerland in 1997 and finishing 1997-98 as leading scorer.

The goals have continued at the Breton club, who have kept pace with the League front-runners and are threatening to become another Lens.

The French are also raving about Nonda's physical play, which is combined with a delicate touch. To many, Nonda's style is reminiscent of Weah's playing days at Monaco and Paris Saint-Germain. "When you watch Shabani the comparisons with Weah are immediate," says Yves Colleu, the Rennes coach.

Nonda, born in Bujumbura, has had something of a cosmopolitan career, and although he is the most famous footballer from the tiny East African country, he has yet to win a cap for Indamba, as the national team in Burundi are known.

He and his family left their homeland six years ago during the civil strife which pitted the country's two tribes against each other.

Nonda's family headed for Zaire, where his father was born, but the then teenager went in the other direction to Tanzania, where he signed for Young Africans, the most popular club in the country.

In 1995, after Young Africans had eliminated South African club Vaal Professionals from the African Cup-winners Cup, he went south to join Vaal Pros for a single season before going to Switzerland.

That was a shock initially for the young Burundian, bemused by the weather and the culture. But he lodged with Zurich's coach Raimondo Ponte, which helped Nonda quickly come to terms with his new surroundings.

It showed on the pitch and last season's haul of 24 goals was testimony to the transition.

This meant a lot of attention for Nonda in the summer, notably from Borussia Monchengladbach and Italian club Udinese, something of a haven these days for African footballers. But the player chose unfashionable Rennes, and says: "I could have joined a big club in Europe but Rennes struck me as ambitious and I'd have a chance to play my football."

Now he is setting his sights on domestic success, and says his big ambition is to win the African Footballer of the Year award, which went to Morocco's Mustapha Hadji in 1998.

"I'd like to prove that Burundi is not just about war and strife," he says. But Nonda would then also have to take up one of the many invitations that have come his way from national team coach Baudouin Ribakare.

Club Stade Rennes (Fra)
Country Burundi
Born March 6, 1977, in Bujumbura
Previous clubs Young Africans (Tan), Vaal Professionals (SAf), FC Zurich (Swi)
International caps None

He has often promised to return home to play and was in the squad for a World Cup qualifying tie against Sierra Leone three years ago. Last year he missed three African Nations Cup qualifiers (twice against Tanzania and then at home to Senegal) because of club commitments, but he will be needed if Burundi are to qualify from a group that includes Nigeria and Burkina Faso.

Mark Gleeson

Iranians strike gold

Azam Mahmood reports on the soccer tournament at the Asian Games in Thailand

DESPITE an onerous schedule, Mansour Pourhedari's Iran won the Asian Games gold medal, beating a resurgent Kuwait side 2-0 in an all-West Asia Final.

Iran, despite being down to 10 men for most of the game, dominated through midfielders Karim Bagheri, Hamid Estili and Dariush Yazdani. First-half goals by Ahmed Karimi and World Cup veteran Bagheri put the match out of reach for the Kuwaitis, who missed injured star striker Jasem Al-Huwaidi.

It was the second Asian Games title for Iran, who beat North Korea for the gold in 1990.

The Iranians, always the favourites, outplayed Kuwait in every department in the first half. Midfielder Karimi stood out for Iran, heading in from close range after a corner in the fourth minute and showing flair in carving up the Kuwaitis.

Kuwait striker Farj Laheeb, who finished as the tournament's leading scorer with nine goals, one more than Al-Huwaidi, seldom threatened as the Iranians never allowed the Kuwaiti attack any time or space. But the Kuwaitis also managed to shut down Bayern Munich star Ali Daei, Iran's top scorer at the Games with eight goals.

Bagheri was another key man in an Iranian side who were without the injured Mohammad Khakpour. He hit his third goal of the Games in the 29th minute, rounding the Kuwaiti defence and firing a shot from the edge of the goal area just inside the far post.

In the second half, the Iranians largely sat on their lead and allowed Kuwait to regroup and win a series of free-kicks and corners. Laheeb and Bader Al-Halabeej threatened but couldn't find the net.

Iran were reduced to 10 men when defender Mehdi Mahdavikia was sent off for a high challenge on Kuwait's Muhammad Ben Haji. But the Iranians held off a relentless series of Kuwaiti attacks to maintain a clean sheet.

"I'm very happy for the Iranian team," said a jubilant Daei before mounting the podium to receive the gold medal. "The Iranian team is the best in Asia and this feels normal to us."

A dejected Al-Huwaidi said that five days' rest wasn't enough to overcome his injury and that "it was painful to sit on the sidelines and watch my team lose".

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah, head of the Kuwaiti soccer federation and the Olympic Council of Asia, said his players were intimidated by the Iranians in the first half and made mistakes, but found their feet again in the second.

"I'm happy for the Iranians; they deserved to win," the sheikh said. "The Kuwaitis are newcomers and we are missing nine of our players. They have done very well."

Al-Sabah courted controversy earlier in the tournament when he led calls for a boycott by Asian teams of the 2002 World Cup finals in protest at FIFA's decision to allocate Asia just two qualifying berths for the finals, in addition to the places for co-hosts Japan and South Korea. Another Asian team will play-off against a South American country for a further place.

For France 98, Asia had three automatic qualifying places, while Iran qualified after a play-off with Australia.

An emergency meeting of the AFC executive committee unanimously decided to give FIFA until March to increase the continent's representation – or face a boycott from Asia.

AFC chief executive Peter Velappan said: "Let us maintain the status quo, which is three and half places, and from this we are willing to sacrifice one for the hosts, which is two and half. We are now asking FIFA to restore the half seat that has been taken away from us."

Iran brought a side packed with World Cup veterans to the Games. Their experience showed throughout the three-week soccer competition, which started off with 23 teams.

Tiny Oman beat the Iranians in a second round group game, but otherwise Iran dominated their matches.

Japan and South Korea left most of their World Cup veterans at home in favour of younger players in preparation for the 2000 Olympics in Sydney.

In the battle for bronze, China dashed Thailand's hopes of capturing their first-ever soccer medal at the Asian Games. Crystal Palace star Fan Zhiyi opened the scoring in the 25th minute before a capacity crowd of 20,000 in the southern city of Songkhla, slotting a free-kick through a gap in the Thai wall.

Substitute Wang Peng added a second 21 minutes into the second half, with a shot that cannoned off the keeper into the net. Ma Mingyu later came down the right side and fired home from a tight angle to complete the 3-0 scoreline.

The Thais were a shadow of the side that produced the upset of the tournament in the quarter-finals when they beat the heavily fancied South Korea. Under English coach Peter Withe, Thailand were hoping to better their best Asian Games finish of fourth place, achieved in 1990, but China's greater depth kept them at bay.

Even so, for China the result was also a disappointment, having taken the silver at the last Asian Games in Japan, four years ago. Their young squad lost twice to Iran in the tournament, once in the second round and again in the semis.

ASIAN GAMES – RESULTS

FIRST ROUND

GROUP A

Turkmenistan 2 Vietnam 0
South Korea 2 Turkmenistan 3
South Korea 4 Vietnam 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Turkmenistan	2	2	0	0	5	2	6
South Korea	2	1	0	1	6	3	3
Vietnam	2	0	0	2	0	6	0

GROUP B

China 4 Lebanon 1
China 4 Cambodia 1
Lebanon 5 Cambodia 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
China	2	2	0	0	8	2	6
Lebanon	2	1	0	1	6	5	3
Cambodia	2	0	0	2	2	9	0

GROUP C

Japan 5 Nepal 0
Japan 1 India 0
India 1 Nepal 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan	2	2	0	0	6	0	6
India	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Nepal	2	0	0	2	0	6	0

GROUP D

Tajikistan 3 Maldives 0
Qatar 2 Tajikistan 1
Qatar 4 Maldives 0

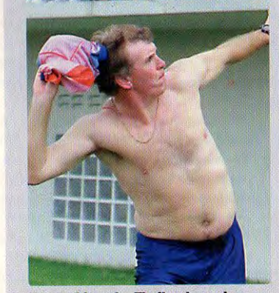
	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Qatar	2	2	0	0	6	1	6
Tajikistan	2	1	0	1	4	2	3
Maldives	2	0	0	2	0	7	0

GROUP E

UAE 3 North Korea 3 (UAE won 4-1 on pens)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
UAE	1	0	1	0	3	3	1
North Korea	1	0	1	0	3	3	1

Saudi Arabia withdrew



Korea skinned...Thailand coach Peter Withe

Flying the flag...Iran celebrate their gold

GROUP F

Oman 6 Hong Kong 0
Thailand 5 Hong Kong 0
Thailand 2 Oman 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Thailand	2	2	0	0	7	0	6
Oman	2	1	0	1	6	2	3
Hong Kong	2	0	0	2	0	11	0

GROUP G

Kuwait 11 Mongolia 0
Uzbekistan 3 Kuwait 3
Uzbekistan 15 Mongolia 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Uzbekistan	2	1	1	0	18	3	4
Kuwait	2	1	1	0	14	3	4
Mongolia	2	0	0	2	0	26	0

GROUP H

Iran 2 Kazakhstan 0
Kazakhstan 5 Laos 0
Iran 6 Laos 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iran	2	2	0	0	8	1	6
Kazakhstan	2	1	0	1	5	2	3
Laos	2	0	0	2	1	11	0

SECOND ROUND

GROUP 1

Uzbekistan 4 North Korea 0
Turkmenistan 3 India 2
Turkmenistan 1 North Korea 1
Uzbekistan 2 India 0
North Korea 2 India 0
Uzbekistan 1 Turkmenistan 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Uzbekistan	3	2	1	0	7	1	7
Turkmenistan	3	1	2	0	5	4	5
North Korea	3	1	1	1	3	5	4
India	3	0	0	3	2	7	0

GROUP 2

South Korea 2 Japan 0
Kuwait 5 United Arab Emirates 0
South Korea 2 United Arab Emirates 1
Japan 2 Kuwait 1
United Arab Emirates 1 Japan 0
South Korea 1 Kuwait 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
South Korea	3	3	0	0	5	1	9
Kuwait	3	1	0	2	6	3	3
Japan	3	1	0	2	2	4	3
UAE	3	1	0	2	2	7	3

GROUP 3

China 3 Tajikistan 1
Oman 4 Iran 2
Iran 5 Tajikistan 0
China 6 Oman 1
Iran 2 China 1
Tajikistan 3 Oman 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
China	3	2	0	1	10	4	6
Iran	3	2	0	1	9	5	6
Oman	3	1	1	1	8	11	4
Tajikistan	3	0	1	2	4	11	1

GROUP 4

Qatar 1 Lebanon 0
Thailand 1 Kazakhstan 1
Kazakhstan 2 Qatar 0
Thailand 1 Lebanon 0
Lebanon 3 Kazakhstan 0
Thailand 1 Qatar 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Qatar	3	2	0	1	3	3	6
Thailand	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Kazakhstan	3	1	1	1	3	4	4
Lebanon	3	1	0	2	3	2	3

QUARTER-FINALS

Iran 4 Uzbekistan 0
China 3 Turkmenistan 0
Thailand 2 South Korea 1 (aet)
Kuwait 0 Qatar 0 (Kuwait won 3-1 on pens)

SEMI-FINALS

Iran 1 China 0
Thailand 0 Kuwait 3

THIRD PLACE PLAY-OFF

Thailand 0 China 3

FINAL

Iran 2 Kuwait 0
(at Rajamangala)

IN BRIEF

Dandy Pandey

A GOLDEN GOAL earned India a 3-2 win over hosts Sri Lanka in the Final of the Freedom Cup, a four-nation tournament.

India had finished top of the group section by drawing 1-1 with Sri Lanka, and beating Malaysia 3-1 and Maldives 2-1.

In the Final, India twice came from behind before Rajesh Pandey scored the winner in extra time.

The Rovers Cup, contested for the 98th time, went to Bengal-Mumbai on their first appearance in the Final. They had an easy 3-0 win over Bombay's Central Railway, who had two men sent off.

The tournament was a below-strength affair, with several players from the Calcutta clubs on duty at the Asian Games.

Mohun Bagan, under new coach P.K. Banerjee, beat East Bengal 2-1 to win the 104th IFA Shield.

G.C. Das and Bhasi Malaparamba

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

WITH foreign players allowed to sign for local clubs after an 11-year ban, African players have been the stars this season.

The Ghanaian Abedi Pele (Al Ain), Zambian Kalusha Bwalay (Al Wahda) and Ivorian Joel Tiehi (Al Jazira) have been an instant hit in the country which is seen as being the poorest in the Gulf.

Al Wahda were surprise leaders at the end of the first stage, largely thanks to the form of Senegalese forward Bouri Lah, who scored nine goals in 11 games. Al Sha'ab are six points adrift in second.

SAUDI ARABIA

FORMER Aston Villa striker Dalian Atkinson scored in his first game for Al Ittihad, a 1-0 win against Ansar. The result took his side to second, six points behind Al Hilal.

Al Ittihad also boast Dutchman Rob Witschge and Moroccan Ahmed Bahja. Al Hilal have signed just one foreign player, the Albanian international forward Elija Litana.

SYRIA

AL JAISH are cruising towards the title, topping the table with 27 points. Starring is 21-year-old international Sayyed Bayazid, who scored hat-tricks in his last two games.

Mohamed Chbaro

Debut goal...Dalian Atkinson

SINGAPORE

Referee Ramasamy Rajandran has been jailed for eight months and fined £3,900 for his involvement in a fixed S.League match. Ramasamy was found guilty of accepting £1,100 in bribes from bookmakers in exchange for helping to rig the game, played in 1996.

Azam Mahmood

Macala leaves on a high

Mohamed Chbaro at the Gulf Cup

GULF CUP

KUWAIT's success in winning the Gulf Cup for the ninth time in 14 attempts was due largely to their Czech coach, Milan Macala.

Many people were genuinely upset at the tournament's finale when Macala announced that he was planning to quit the Gulf and return to Prague.

He had been in the job for four years – a long time by Arab National Federation standards – and in addition to winning the Gulf Cup in 1996 and again this time, he had built a team of considerable flair and talent.

Macala also showed that he could react quickly when things went wrong. His team began the competition against Saudi Arabia, and two rare blunders by goalkeeper Khaled Al-Fadi resulted in a 2-1 defeat.

Despite Al-Fadi's previous good record, Macala promptly dropped him and called up Ahmed Jassem – who conceded only three goals in the remaining four games, all of them won.

Kuwait beat Qatar 6-2, Bahrain 2-0, Oman 5-0 and United Arab Emirates 4-1 to finish a point clear of Saudi Arabia.

In addition to the title, Kuwait players won Top Scorer (Jassem Al-Howidi with nine goals), Most Valuable Player (midfielder Badr Hajji), and the Fair Play Award; Saudi Arabia's Mohamed Al-Deayea was named Best Goalkeeper.

The Saudis were the flop of the tournament, despite their second place. Players such as Fouad Anwar Amin, Saeed Al-Owairan and Khaled Al-Muwallid had been axed after their dismal World Cup performances, and the newcomers were lucky to finish so highly, owing a great deal to Al-Deayea.

Before the kick-off Saudi were hot favourites, but they never looked the part. For the first time in the history of Saudi football, the press had been allowed to criticise players and officials, and they took full advantage.

The Gulf Cup is very important in Saudi Arabia (perhaps too important) and finishing behind Kuwait is a terrible blow. Not surprisingly, the coach paid the price. Otto Pfister was sacked and Aime Jacquet, who took France to victory in the 1998 World Cup, is said to be considering an offer to take over.

The decision to replace Pfister meant that Saudi had changed coaches four times in 1998. Nelo Vingada was replaced during the World Cup qualifiers by Pfister, who was replaced by Carlos Alberto Parreira in time for France 98. He was sacked after only two matches at the finals and Pfister duly returned.

The UAE, where foreigners are now able to play, lack strength on both the club and international scene, and did well to finish third without their most famous player, striker Adnan Al-Talyari, who has retired, and twins Bakhit and Khamis Saad, who were suspended.

Portuguese coach Carlos Queiroz has a contract until after the Asian Cup in 2000 and the UAE FA say they will honour it, but they must be hoping that the team show improvement by then.

Oman finished fourth, Bahrain fifth and Qatar last, on goal difference. The latter were then linked with German coach Berti Vogts, who was said to be negotiating a three-year contract, but this was later denied.

GULF CUP – RESULTS

Bahrain 0 UAE 1
Saudi Arabia 2 Kuwait 1
Oman 2 Qatar 1
Bahrain 1 Saudi Arabia 1
Kuwait 6 Qatar 2
UAE 3 Oman 2
Saudi Arabia 1 Oman 0
UAE 0 Qatar 0
Bahrain 0 Kuwait 2
Bahrain 0 Qatar 0
Saudi Arabia 1 UAE 0
Kuwait 5 Oman 0
Saudi Arabia 0 Qatar 0
Kuwait 4 UAE 1
Bahrain 2 Oman 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kuwait	5	4	0	1	18	5	12
Saudi Arabia	5	3	2	0	5	2	11
UAE	5	2	1	2	5	7	7
Oman	5	1	1	3	6	12	4
Bahrain	5	0	3	2	3	6	3
Qatar	5	0	3	2	3	8	3

Crossword

Mitre

Win a Mitre Ultimax Fluo Flare – official match ball of the FA

Mitre have kindly donated an Ultimax Fluo Flare, the official match ball of the English Football Association, as first prize for this month's crossword. The first correct entry selected at random after January 29 will win the ball. Five runners-up will each win a copy of the book Football Moods , a photographic essay of the game.

SEND YOUR ENTRY TO: February CROSSWORD, WORLD SOCCER, King's Reach Tower, Stamford St, London, SE1 9LS.

FEBRUARY CROSSWORD

CLUES ACROSS

2 .....Former Aston Villa striker of Zaragoza and Yugoslavia (9)
6 .....Croatian goalkeeper in Belgium with Standard Liege (5)
7 .....Experienced Italian centre-back in the Lazio squad (5)
9 .....Rapid Vienna midfielder who fell out with Dukupil and left for Linza (6)
10 .....Valencia's ex-Galatasaray forward from Romania (4)
12 & 8 Down .Giant international Nigerian defender who joined Fenerbahce (4,9)
14 .....Jorg Berger's successor at Germany's Wildparkstadion (6)
17 .....Former Stuttgart Brazilian currently leading Bayern's attack (5)
18 .....Hungarian national coach who gave way to Bertalan Bicskei (5)
19 .....European club champions, 1992 (9)

CLUES DOWN

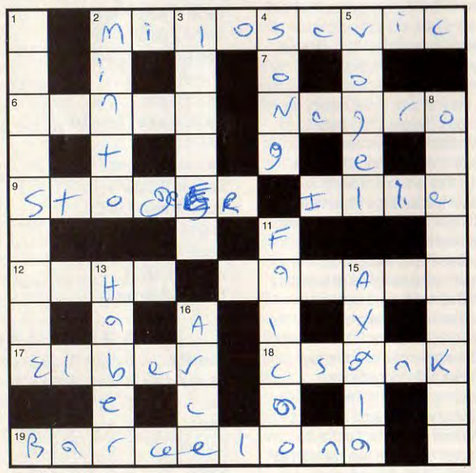
1 .....1997-98 UEFA Cup contenders relegated from the Bundesliga (9)
2 .....Chelsea full-back who switched to Benfica in 1997 (5)
3 .....Coach guiding the fortunes of Hansa Rostock (6)
4 .....One-time Metz defender from Cameroon (4)
5 .....Coach who's had spells with East Germany, Gladbach and Togo (5)
8 .....See 12 Across
11 .....Brazilian idol who coached Japan in 1994 (6)
13 .....Ex-Kaiserslautern and Germany midfielder in Stuttgart's CWC final side (5)
15 .....Napoli's Argentine defender transferred to Milan (5)
16 .....Palmeiras defender who made Paraguay's World Cup squad (4)

JANUARY SOLUTION

ACROSS: 1 Desailly, 7 Madar, 8 Molde, 9 Green, 10 Amor, 13 Cate, 14 Lukic, 17 Agoos, 18 Tikva, 19 Lassissi.
DOWN: 1 Domi, 2 Soderstrom, 3 Israel, 4 Lama, 5 Sierra, 6 Olympiakos, 11 Oceano, 12 Bustos, 15 Issa, 16 Daei.

JANUARY WINNERS

1st Prize: D J Ward, Harrogate, Yorks.
Runners-up: Devaux Joseph, Braine-Le Chateau, Belgium; Andrew Williams, Ashford, Kent; Tim Unwin, Peterborough; David O'Shea, Co Cork; Andy Dunne, Co Kildare.



NAME

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FEB

Diary November/December 1998

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30

ACTION: The Asian Games tournament opens in Thailand. Turkmenistan beat Vietnam 2-0, China defeat Lebanon 4-1 and Oman beat Hong Kong 6-0.
DENMARK: Officials from Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland agree a co-bid to host the 2008 European Championship finals.
ENGLAND: Embattled Peter Johnson resigns as Everton chairman.
GERMANY: Brazilian striker Giovane Elber extends his contract with Bayern Munich to 2001…the DFB demands an explanation from Stuttgart's Bulgarian midfielder Krasimir Balakov over TV film showing him committing an off-the-ball foul on Freiburg's Tunisian international Zoubaier Baya.
ITALY: Inter axe Gigi Simoni – two hours after he is voted Coach of the Year by his fellow coaches.
POLAND: Sports Minister Jacek Dabski reignites his battle with the football federation by accusing the executive of illegally changing its constitution and of mismanaging £200,000 of equipment.
SOUTH KOREA: FIFA president Sepp Blatter, visiting likely 2002 World Cup venues, says the finals could be brought forward to May and June to avoid the mid-summer rainy season.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1

ACTION: Real Madrid beat Vasco da Gama 2-1 in Tokyo to reclaim the World Club Cup they won in its inaugural year, 1960…Kuwait thrash Mongolia 11-0 at the Asian Games.
EGYPT: Morocco midfielder Mustapha Hadji of La Coruna is acclaimed as Africa's Footballer of the Year by the continental confederation in Cairo. Hadji polls 76 votes to Nigerian Jay-Jay Okocha's 74. Another Nigerian, Sunday Oliseh, is third.
ITALY: Internazionale formally confirm Romanian Mircea Lucescu as coach in place of Gigi Simoni…Cosenza of Serie B give a trial to Darren Ferguson, son of the Manchester United manager.
MEXICO: America sack coach Carlos Reinoso after only five months in the job. Paraguayan Carlos Kiesse takes over.
SINGAPORE: Referee Ramasamy Rajandran is jailed for eight years and fined £4,000 for accepting bribes to fix a match in August 1996 between Police Football Club and Sembawang Rangers.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2

ACTION: Galatasaray and Juventus draw 1-1 amid tight security in Istanbul, in their rescheduled Champions League tie…in the Asian Games in Bangkok, striker Chen Yang scores a hat-trick as China beat Cambodia 4-1.
ENGLAND: Watford sign Nigeria World Cup defender Ben Iroha on a free transfer…Bristol City agree a £225,000 fee with Moldova's FC Zimbru for national skipper Ion Testimitanu.
GERMANY: Willi Reimann quits as coach of struggling Nurnberg because his wife is seriously ill. Assistant Thomas Brunner takes over as caretaker.
SCOTLAND: Champions Celtic finally complete the £3m purchase of Australia forward Marko Viduka from Croatia Zagreb.
SWITZERLAND: UEFA refuses Lens' request to quash the red card and Champions League ban on forward Tony Vairelles, but the disciplinary committee does suspend Arsenal defender Lee Dixon, with whom Vairelles tangled at Wembley, for one game.
UNITED STATES: DC United appoint Thomas Rongen coach to succeed new national boss Bruce Arena.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 3

ACTION: Kenji Fukuda scores his third goal of the Asian Games as Japan beat India 1-0.
ENGLAND: Blackburn name Manchester United's assistant manager Brian Kidd as boss in succession to Roy Hodgson.

Banned…Krasimir Balakov of Stuttgart

GERMANY: The DFB bans Stuttgart's Bulgarian World Cup midfielder Krasimir Balakov until January 28 and fines him £16,000 for kneeing Tunisian Zoubaier Baya of Freiburg off the ball.
HOLLAND: Alkmaar coach Wim Van Hanegem says he will quit at the end of the season after failing to agree a contract extension.
ITALY: Defender Alessandro Nesta makes his comeback for Lazio in their 2-1 win over Inter in the Coppa Italia quarter-final, first leg – his first match since he tore knee ligaments playing for Italy against Austria in the World Cup finals in France.
MOROCCO: The federation becomes the sixth to officially enter the bidding race to host the 2006 World Cup.
PARAGUAY: Controversial General Lino Cesar Oviedo says he will stay on as 1999 Copa America organising boss despite a supreme court order that he return to jail to finish a 10-year term for leading an attempted coup.
SOUTH AFRICA: Trott Moloto is appointed national coach after being assistant to Frenchman Philippe Troussier at the World Cup finals.

Barcelona's new boss?…Fabio Capello

SPAIN: Barcelona are reported to have signed a pre-contract with Fabio Capello to take over next season from Louis Van Gaal…Second Division Compostela sign Russian striker Dmitry Radchenko from La Coruna.
SWITZERLAND: FIFA's executive committee confirms former international referee Michel Zen-Ruffinen as general secretary in succession to now-president Sepp Blatter.
UNITED STATES: Giants Stadium officials decide that, for at least one more season, New Jersey MetroStars will have to play part of the season on artificial turf…DC United transfer Argentine midfielder Mario Gori to Miami Fusion.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4

ACTION: Atletico Nacional beat fellow Colombians Deportivo Cali 3-1 in the first leg of the Copa Merconorte final – in front of a mere 1,000 fans.
BULGARIA: Liteks Lovech sell Bulgaria defender Rossen Kirilov to Turkey's Adanaspor on an 18-month contract for £400,000.
FRANCE: The future of the youth scheme is thrown into doubt after FIFA rules that Italy's Inter can keep former French apprentices Mickael Silvestre and Ousmane Dabo, owing Rennes only a transfer fee of £1.5m each…World Cup euphoria is shown to have triggered record League gates – almost three million fans having watched top-flight matches between August and November, up more than 500,000 on last season.
GERMANY: Winfried Schaefer quits as Stuttgart coach. Wolfgang Rolff is appointed caretaker.
SWITZERLAND: FIFA's executive committee allocates the 32 places for the 2002 World Cup finals, leaving Asian nations to fight for two places alongside joint-hosts South Korea and Japan...FIFA agrees in principle to introduce random out-of-competition drug tests for players but remains opposed to an International Olympic Committee plan to harmonise controls...FIFA provisionally sets aside nine days in January 2000 for the first eight-team World Club Championship.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 5

ACTION: DC United become the first US club to win a major international prize when they defeat Vasco da Gama 2-0 to win the Interamerican Cup 2-1 on aggregate…Sergei Ubedev scores four and Igor Shkvirin and Mirdjadai Kasimov three each as Uzbekistan beat Mongolia 15-0 in the Asian Games…in Germany, Bayer Leverkusen defeat Wolfsburg 3-0 to overtake Bayern Munich at the top on goal difference…Gabriel Batistuta's 12th goal in 12 League games gives Serie A leaders Fiorentina a 1-0 win over Bologna and keeps them three points clear...in Spain, Barcelona slip further into crisis after a 2-1 defeat at La Coruna.
GREECE: PAOK fans block Greece's main north-south motorway in protest at the five-game home ban imposed for hooligan trouble during the League game with Olympiakos...fans rampage before and after the derby between Olympiakos and fierce rivals Panathinaikos.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6

ACTION: Tunisia's Esperance draw 1-1 with Primiero Agosto of Angola, taking the African Cup-winners Cup 4-2 on aggregate.
AUSTRALIA: Officials and players unite in condemning the 2002 World Cup qualifying route which means that the Oceania winners must play off against a South American nation if they are to reach the finals.
GREECE: PAOK fans maintain their disciplinary protests by smashing up equipment of the TV company which the club barred from its stadium – thus incurring a £65,000 fine.
ITALY: Turin prosecutor Raffaello Guarinello says he will turn his doping inquiry attention to the deaths of 45 players which may be drug-related.
PORTUGAL: Benfica agree terms to sign Portugal striker Jorge Cadete from Spain's Celta Vigo.
SOUTH AFRICA: Former England international Johnny Byrne is sacked as coach of Cape Town Spurs.
SCOTLAND: Celtic chairman Fergus McCann threatens to sue Marko Viduka after the Australian walks out on the Scottish champions without kicking a ball after his transfer from Croatia Zagreb.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 7

FRANCE: Paris Saint-Germain's Portuguese coach Artur Jorge signs defensive midfielder Helder Batista from Boavista of Portugal – his first recruit since taking charge in October.
GERMANY: Hertha Berlin sign Polish striker Piotr Reiss from Lech Poznan on a three-year contract.
HOLLAND: Ajax's Denmark defender Ole Tobiasen undergoes further knee surgery and is ruled out for most of the rest of the season…Sparta Rotterdam dismiss coach Hans Van der Zee and appoint assistants Adri Van Tiggelen and Dolf Roks as caretakers.

Saying sorry…Inter's Taribo West

ITALY: Raffaello Guarinello confirms he will look into the premature deaths of 45 players in the last 10 years from drug-related causes…Inter's Nigeria defender Taribo West apologises for pulling off his jersey and throwing it at new coach Mircea Lucescu after being substituted against Vicenza…Sampdoria's Argentine midfielder Ariel Ortega is arrested and charged with drink-driving.
PORTUGAL: Benfica buy veteran Wales striker Dean Saunders from Sheffield United for £500,000.
RUSSIA: Federation president Vyacheslav Koloskov wins a decisive battle in his fight to hold his job after the executive rejects a proposal that professional clubs should be allowed votes in congress.
SOUTH AFRICA: New national coach Trott Moloto recalls Bari striker Phil Masinga for a friendly against Egypt on December 16.
SWITZERLAND: UEFA rejects a Lens appeal against a one-match suspension imposed on Tony Vairelles after his expulsion against Arsenal.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8

ACTION: Three Italian, three French and two Spanish clubs turn the UEFA Cup third round second legs into a southern Europe closed shop…at the Asian Games, China manager Bobby Houghton tips Fan Zhiyi as English Premiership material after he inspires their 3-1 second round win over Tajikistan.
AUSTRALIA: Marko Viduka's agent appears to back Celtic's refusal to pay a transfer fee to Croatia Zagreb for the runaway striker.
BRAZIL: Pele says he intends to coach the youth teams of his old home club Santos from the start of January.
ENGLAND: Manager Arsene Wenger signs a new contract with Arsenal until 2002…Newcastle sell England midfielder David Batty back to his former club Leeds…Southampton offer trials to Hungarian internationals Zoltan Kovacs from Ujpest and Janos Matyus from Kispest…a major survey about drugs use reveals higher than expected levels of creatine use within British sport.
GERMANY: Eintracht Frankfurt dismiss coach Horst Ehrmantraut. Assistant Bernhard Lippert is caretaker…Borussia Dortmund give goalkeeper Stefan Klos the all-clear to hold transfer talks with Rangers.
GREECE: Panathinaikos president Giorgos Vardinoyiannis demands political action to help cut the violence which threatens the Greek domestic game.
HOLLAND: Wim Van Hanegem extends his contract as Alkmaar coach by five years, only a week after threatening to quit the club.
HONG KONG: The fraud squad makes eight further arrests – including that of a policeman – in the latest swoop on illegal bookies' match-fixing rings.
ITALY: Sampdoria suspend Argentine forward Ariel Ortega and team-mates Cate and Fernando Cordoba after a drink-driving altercation with police.
REP IRELAND: The Irish Republic will play Northern Ireland in Dublin on May 29 with proceeds going to the victims of last August's Omagh bombing.
ROMANIA: Vasile Boudi, manager of Olimpia Satu Mare, is arrested on £65,000 fraud charges.
RUSSIA: Vyacheslav Koloskov retains his federation presidency by winning 52 of the 64 votes at a marathon nine-hour session of the FA.
SCOTLAND: Alex Miller resigns as manager of the Premier Division's bottom club Aberdeen.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9

ACTION: The last round of Champions League matches sees Inter, Bayern, Kyiv, Olympiakos, Juventus and Kaiserslautern qualify with Manchester United and Real Madrid the best runners-up…Trinidad & Tobago's Joe Public win the Caribbean Clubs Championship…Mexico's Monterrey qualify for the 1999 Copa Libertadores by beating Universidad de Los Andes of Venezuela 4-1 to top their pre-qualifying group…at the Asian Games, South Korea and holders Uzbekistan reach the quarter-finals.
BRAZIL: Santos blame the referee after losing to Corinthians in the semi-final play-offs of the national championship.
CROATIA: Marko Viduka flies to Australia after meeting Celtic officials and agreeing that he will, after a holiday, play for the Glasgow club.
GERMANY: Borussia Dortmund goalkeeper Stefan Klos says he is considering an offer from Scotland's Premier Division leaders Rangers.
ITALY: A court orders Milan to pay £45,000 in damages to a fan who suffered an eye injury after being caught up in hooligan trouble at a home game against Sampdoria in October 1990.
PARAGUAY: The South American confederation bans goalkeeper Jose Luis Chilavert from its club competitions for three matches for threatening a match official and fines his Argentine club Velez Sarsfield for forgetting their change strip and having to wear borrowed kit in a tie against Olimpia Asuncion.
SPAIN: A 28-year-old Real Sociedad fan dies from stab wounds allegedly inflicted by a rival fan from Atletico Madrid before the clubs' UEFA Cup tie.
SWEDEN: Halmstad agree terms to sell central defender Jesper Mattsson to Nottingham Forest.
UNITED STATES: Columbus Crew say the inaugural match in their new stadium will be on May 15 against New England Revolution…CONCACAF decides that its Champions Cup will be contested annually every November from 1999 to help prepare the winners for entry into FIFA's proposed new World Club Championship.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10

ACTION: Atletico Nacional beat Deportivo Cali 1-0 in the second leg of the Copa Merconorte final for a 4-1 aggregate win…Iran thrash Tajikistan 5-0 and China beat Oman 6-1 to reach the quarter-finals of the Asian Games.
BELGIUM: Brugge coach Eric Gerets admits publicly for the first time that he will coach PSV Eindhoven next season.
ENGLAND: JVC, Arsenal's sponsors for 18 years, end their association...Chelsea deny bidding for River Plate's Spain World Cup striker Juan Antonio Pizzi.

Unsettled…Monaco's David Trezeguet

FRANCE: Monaco face a major crisis with speculation that stars such as David Trezeguet and Thierry Henry will demand transfers following the club's UEFA Cup exit.
GERMANY: Hansa Rostock say they are open to offers for Croatia striker Igor Pamic…Borussia Monchengladbach's new coach Rainer Bonhof sets strict rules for his relegation-threatened team to remove any distractions – such as mobile phones – before games…1990 World Cup-winner Guido Buchwald says he will use the winter break to consider whether to retire at the end of the season.
HOLLAND: Ajax's share price tumbles after their Champions League exit…an opinion poll reveals only 12 per cent of Europeans are aware that Euro 2000 will be staged in Holland and Belgium.
ITALY: Alex Del Piero returns to Turin in confident mood after his trip to the United States for knee surgery.
SWITZERLAND: UEFA'S executive formally endorses the proposed expansions of the Champions League and the UEFA Cup.
THAILAND: Asian officials at the Asian Games agree to hold an emergency meeting to fight FIFA's allocation of two qualifying places to the confederation for the 2002 World Cup.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11

ACTION: In the Asian Games, South Korea reach the quarter-finals with a 1-0 defeat of Kuwait and holders Uzbekistan qualify following a 1-1 draw against Turkmenistan.
BRAZIL: National coach Vanderley Luxemburgo is given a 60-day touchline ban from club matches – the fourth suspension of his career – after being sent off during Corinthians' national championship tie against Vitoria…the climax of the national championship is thrown into confusion as one of the ties, between Corinthians and Cruzeiro, may clash with a popular children's TV programme hosted by the former model Xuxa.
BULGARIA: Ivan Slavkov, son-in-law of late Communist dictator Todor Zhivkov, is re-elected as president of the federation, beating Sofia mayor Stefan Sofiyanski 283-128 in a ballot.
CROATIA: International midfielder Robert Prosinecki gets his long-delayed national service conscription orders.
FRANCE: The federation suspends Rangers goalkeeper Lionel Charbonnier for two international matches, after he walked out of the national team training camp before a friendly against Russia.
GERMANY: Stuttgart striker Fredi Bobic must undergo shoulder surgery but should be fit for the restart after the winter break…Nurnberg dismiss general manager Georg Volkert…Hamburg's Denmark midfielder Jakob Friis-Hansen is forced to to retire prematurely because of knee trouble.
SLOVAKIA: Dusan Galis of Spartak Trnava is appointed national coach in succession to Jozef Jankech.
SPAIN: Three Atletico Madrid followers are arrested in connection with the death of a Real Sociedad fan before a UEFA Cup tie between the clubs.
SWEDEN: IFK Gothenburg's central defender Teddy Lucic signs for Bologna.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12

ACTION: Crowd chaos envelops the Asian Games soccer tournament as hosts Thailand lose 2-1 to Qatar – a defeat which does not matter since both enter the quarter-finals…in France, Bordeaux and Marseille maintain their domination by recording 3-0 home wins over Le Havre and Metz respectively…in Germany, a last-minute goal by Egyptian defender Hany Ramzy enables champions Kaiserslautern to extend their winning run to seven matches with a 2-1 victory over Eintracht Frankfurt…Denilson misses a penalty as Betis are held 0-0 at home by Atletico Madrid in Spain.
HOLLAND: Champions Ajax sack Morten Olsen and replace him as coach with reserve team trainer Jan Wouters.
ITALY: Juventus coach Marcello Lippi confirms he will quit when his contract expires at the end of the season…Inter caretaker Mircea Lucescu says he intends to return to Rapid Bucharest at the season's end instead of becoming Inter's youth boss.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13

ACTION: ASEC Abidjan of Ivory Coast beat Dynamos of Zimbabwe 4-2 to win the African Champions League Cup…in Greece, AEK Athens beat Panathinaikos 2-0 to go top…Bayern Munich regain the lead in Germany by defeating Bayer Leverkusen 2-0…Ajax draw 0-0 at home against Heerenveen, in Holland, in their first match under Jan Wouters…in Italy, Milan go second by beating Vicenza 1-0 with a late goal from George Weah…in Spain, Barcelona spiral further into crisis, losing 3-1 at home to Villarreal; Real Madrid beat Real Sociedad 3-2 in a match marked by anti-hooliganism demonstrations.
EGYPT: New champions ASEC Abidjan are drawn against FC105 Libreville of Gabon in the preliminary round of next season's African Champions League.
ITALY: National coach Dino Zoff recalls fit-again defender Alessandro Nesta and brings in forward Marco Delvecchio for the federation's centenary match against a World XI.

Benfica bound…Kyiv's Oleg Luzhnyi

PORTUGAL: Benfica sign Ukraine defender Oleh Luzhnyi on a three-and-a-half year contract from Kyiv Dynamo.
SWITZERLAND: UEFA confirms that all yellow cards will be wiped out for the quarter-final stages of the three European club competitions.
THAILAND: Sheikh Ahmad Al-Saber, president of the Olympic Council of Asia, says Asian nations are considering boycotting the 2002 World Cup in the row over qualifying allocations...70 ticket touts are arrested after violence erupts among angry fans seeking to buy tickets for Asian Games matches.
UKRAINE: Kyiv defender Olexander Holovko flies to Liverpool for talks.

Compiled by Keir Radnedge

OBITUARY

BERTIL NORDAHL, oldest of the three Swedish brothers who starred in the 1948 Olympic Games win in London, dies aged 81. Played in Italy with Atalanta for three seasons. Later coached Orebro, Brage and Degerfors.

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INTERNATIONALS

Wednesday, November 18

Nov 18 - Beirut - intl friendly
Lebanon 0
Iraq 2 (Razak Farhan 55, Habib Jafar 68)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,000

Saturday, November 21

Nov 21 - Yerevan - intl friendly
Armenia 2 (Barsegyan 8, Simonian 17)
Estonia 1 (Zelinski 55)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 1,500. **Ref:** Nalbandyan (Arm)
Armenia: Abrahamyan - Sukiasyan, F Hodzhoyan, Mkrtchyan, Simonian - K Barseghyan (Yepranosyan 61), Minasyan (Shakhalyan 46), Petrosyants (Badikyan 72), Markosyan (A Hakopyan 66) - Yesayan (H Hakopyan 85), Mrkaelyan (Amiryan 66).
Estonia: Tohver - Kirs, Hohlov-Simson, Saviauk (Meet 69), U Rooba - Svets (Zelinski 27), Alonen (Piiroja 85), Smirnov (Viikmae 36), Kristal - Oper (O'Kinnel-Bronin 66), Arbeiter (Allas 73).

Sunday, November 22

Nov 22 - Shanghai - intl friendly
China 0
South Korea 0
Att: 35,000

Tuesday, November 24

Nov 24 - Bangkok - intl friendly
Thailand 0
Qatar 0
Ref: Ekchai Thanatdeunkhao (Thai)
Match abandoned, 52min

Saturday, November 28

Nov 28 - Baku - intl friendly
Azerbaijan 2 (Sultanov 81, Kh Mamedov 87pen)
Estonia 1 (Kirs 66)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,500. **Ref:** Mamedov (Aze)
Azerbaijan: Gasanzade - F Mamedov, Abdashev, M Gambarov (Gashimov 89), Shukyurov - Yadulayev, A Kurbanov, K Mamedov, R Musayev (S Sultanov 74) - Rakhmanov, Tagizade (Ismailov 74).
Estonia: Tohver - Meet (U Rooba 57), Kirs, Saviauk, Alonen - Vikmae, Smirnov, Kristal, Svets - Oper (O'Konnel-Bronin 28), Arbeiter (Oun 77).

Wednesday, December 16

Dec 16 - Johannesburg - intl friendly
South Africa 2 (Benedict McCarthy 40, 74)
Egypt 1 (Hossam Hassan 34)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 30,000
S Africa: Vonk - Khomane, Fish, Issa - Moeti, Mngomeni, Masilela (Lekoelea 64), Fortune, Carnell (Buckley 62) - Masinga (Ndlanya 65), McCarthy (Zuma 80).
Egypt: Nader El Sayed - Abdelzaher El Saqqa, Mohamed Omara (Yasser Rayan 80), Mehdat Abdelhadi, Mohamed Youssef - Hady Khashaba, Ahmed Hassan (Alaa Ibrahim 89), Hesham Hanafy (Hossam Abdelmonem 59), Hazem Imam - Abdelattar Sabry (Osama Nabih 80), Hossam Hassan.

Dec 16 - Rome - FIGC Centenary
Italy 6 (Inzaghi 9, Di Francesco 36, Fuser 40, Chiesa 56, 79, 85)
World XI 2 (Batistuta 20, Weah 22)
HT: 3-2. **Att:** 21,352
Italy: Peruzzi (Buffon 46) - Cannavaro (Torricelli 46), Nesta (Negro 39), Maldini (Pessotto 54) - Fuser, D Baggio (Tommasi 46), Albertini (Cois 46), Di Francesco (Bachini 46) - Inzaghi (Delvecchio 46), Totti (Chiesa 54).
World: Pagliuca (Shorumnu 46) - Ze Maria, Dunga (Joao Pinto 65), Hierro (Nakata 55), Nyathi - Winter (Guerrero 46), Rui Costa (Salas 55), Zidane (Hernandez 46) - Weah, Ronaldo (Suker 31), Batistuta (Bierhoff 46).

EUROPEAN UNDER-21 CHAMPIONSHIP

Gp 2: Nov 17 (Tirana): Albania 0 Greece 5 (Karagounis 19pen, Choutos 24, 55, 74, 83).
Gp 3: Nov 17 (Coleraine): Northern Ireland 1 (Healy 74) Moldova 1 (Lungu 43).
Gp 8: Nov 17 (Valletta): Malta 5 (Mallia 12, 36, Zahra 60, Galea 68, Grima 83) Macedonia 1 (D Dimitrovski 72).
Nov 18 (Sartid): Yugoslavia 1 (Vladimir Ivic 5) Rep Ireland (Kevin Kilbane 90pen).
Gp 9: Nov 18 (Paisley): Scotland 2 (Dargo 40, 69) Belgium 2 (Somers 8, Vanderpaar 14pen).

OTHER MATCHES

Nov 17 (Ipswich): England U21 0 Czech Rep U21 1 (T Dosek 41).
Nov 18 (Braganca): Portugal U21 3 (Zeferino 19, Edgar 39, Moreira 86) Wales U21 0.
Nov 19 (Kingston): Jamaica 1 (Burton 76), Botafogo 1 (Bebeto 89).
Nov 23 (Tokyo): Japan U21 1 (Nakamura 42) Argentina U21 0

EUROPE

UEFA CUP

3rd rnd, 2nd legs (Dec 8)

Atletico Madrid 4 (Jugovic 16, 45pen, Santi 96, Jose Mari 98)
Real Sociedad 12 (Gracia 51)
HT: 2-0. **90min:** 2-1. **Att:** 37,000. **Ref:** Melo Pereira (Por)
Atletico Madrid 5-3 on agg
At Madrid: Molina - Toni, Chamot, Santi, Serena, Jordi Lardin (Correa 78), Jugovic (Bejbl 46), Mena, Njegus, Jose Mari, Juninho (Fresnedoso 100).
Real Sociedad: Lopez - Lopez Rekarte, Pikabea, Antia, Guerrero (Cvitanovic 46), Juan Gomez, Aranzabal, Idiakez (Adepoju 22), Gracia, Kovacevic, De Paula.

Betis 1 (Oli Alvarez 3)
Bologna 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 35,000
Bologna 4-2 on agg
Betis: Toni Prats - Luis Fernandez, Tomas Olias, Solazabal (Benjamin Zarandona 60), Merino, Cuellar (Galvez 62), Ito Alvarez, Alexis (Canas 67), George, Oli Alvarez, Ivan Perez.
Bologna: Antonioli - Tarantino, Mangone, Boselli, Rinaldi, Cappioli (Magoni 90), Marocchi, Ingesson, Eriberto (Signori 84), K Andersson, Fontolan.

Bordeaux 0
Grasshopper 0
Att: 20,000
Bordeaux on away goals, 3-3 agg
Bordeaux: Rame - Jemmali (Musampa 60), Saveljic, Afanou, Torres Mestre, Grenet, Diabate (Da Rocha 42), Pavon, Micoud, Wiltord, Laslandes (Diawara 90).
Grasshopper: Zuberbuelher - Mazzarelli, Smiljanic (Berner 84), Gren, Christ, Tikva, Tararache, Vogel, Comisetti, Kavelaschvili, Magnin. *Sent off: Tararache 78min.*

Brugge 3 (De Brul 63, De Cock 69, Anic 73)
Lyon 4 (Caveglia 16, 55, 72, Dhorasoo 76)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 14,500
Lyon 5-3 on agg
Brugge: El-Sayed - Lembi, De Brul, Ilic, Borkelmans, De Cock, Van der Elst, Claesens, Anic, Vermant (Fadiga 46), Jankauskas (Schockaert 67).
Lyon: Coupet - Carteron, Laville, Fournier, Delmotte, Bak, Malbranque, Linares, Violeau, Dhorasoo, Caveglia (Kanoute 77).

Liverpool 0
Celta Vigo 1 (Revivo 57)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 30,289. **Ref:** Strampe (Ger)
Celta 4-1 on agg
Liverpool: James (Friedel 64) - Gerard, Staunton, Babb (Murphy 46), Matteo, McAteer, Berger, Carragher, Thompson (Riedle 59), Fowler, Owen.
Celta: Dutruel - Miguel Salgado, Berges, Caceres, Mazinho (Caires 86), Karpin, Revivo (Tomas 71), Gines Sanchez (Gudeji 76), Djorovic, Mostovoi, Makelele.

Marseille 1 (Titi Camara 71)
Monaco 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 60,000
Marseille 3-2 on agg
Marseille: Porato - Blondeau, Blanc, Domoraud, Gallas, Luccin (Issa 88), Brando, Roy, Bravo (Gourvennec 61), Pires, Dugarry (Titi Camara 46).
Monaco: Barthez - Diawara, Christanval, Konjic, Pignol, Legwinski, Djetou, Lamouchi (Irles 43), Gava (Henry 71), Trezeguet, Ikpeba (Gluly 57).

Parma 3 (Balbo 47, Fiore 63, Chiesa 67pen)
Rangers 1 (Albertz 29)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 22,000. **Ref:** Hauge (Nor)
Parma 4-2 on agg
Parma: Buffon - Thuram, Sensini, Cannavaro, Fuser (Mussi 84), Baggio, Boghossain (Fiore 56), Bennarivo, Veron, Balbo, Chiesa (Crespo 74).
Rangers: Niemi - Porrini, Hendry, Amoruso, Numan, Albertz, B Ferguson (Miller 81), I Ferguson, Van Bronckhorst, Wallace (Amato 73), Durie (Vidmar 54).
Sent off: Porrini 45min.

Zurich 2 (Bartlett 60, 79)
Roma 2 (Delvecchio 14, Totti 90)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 15,300
Roma 3-2 on agg
Zurich: Shorunmu - Hodel, Sant'Anna, Bartlett, Lima, Nixon, Chassot, Fischer, Castillo, Di Jorio, Tarone.
Roma: Chimenti - Zago, Di Biagio, Candela, Aldair, Paulo Sergio, Totti, Di Francesco, Pertruzzi, Tommasi, Delvecchio.

AUSTRIA

Saturday, November 21

Sturm Graz 2 (Prilasnig 54, Popovic 70)
FC Tirol 0 Att: 12,000

Lustenau 0
Grazer AK 3 (Drechsel 17, 75, Dmitrovic 21) Att: 6,000

SV Ried 0
Rapid Wien 1 (Wagner 65) Att: 6,000

Vorwarts Steyr 2 (Ernstsson 35, Mayrleb 66)
Salzburg 1 (Koejoe 73) Att: 2,000

Austria Wien 2 (Ernstsson 35, Mayrleb 66)
Linz ASK 0 Att: 3,000

Saturday, November 28

FC Tirol 0
Salzburg 3 (Koejoe 23, 84, Glieder 29) Att: 2,000

Austria Wien 1 (Mayrleb 57)
Sturm Graz 0 Att: 6,000

Grazer AK 1 (Vulkovic 62)
Vorwarts Steyr 0 Att: 6,500

Linz ASK 1 (Milinovic 71)
Rapid Wien 3 (Ba og24, Wagner 42, Freund 55) Att: 6,000

Tuesday, December 1

Vorwarts 1 (Rachimic 44)
Lustenau 1 (Kristo 86) Att: 2,000

Saturday, December 5

Sturm Graz 2 (Reinmayr 54, Vastic 64)
Linz ASK 0 Att: 7,000

Salzburg 1 (Glieder 47)
Lustenau 0 Att: 4,000

Rapid Wien 1 (Purk 78)
Grazer AK 0 Att: 6,000

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	PTS
Sturm Graz	20	14	2	4	38	12	44
Rapid Wien	20	13	4	3	33	14	43
Grazer AK	20	12	4	4	26	14	40
Linz ASK	20	11	3	6	34	24	36
Salzburg	20	7	6	7	27	26	27
Austria Wien	19	7	5	7	20	23	26
FC Tirol	19	5	5	9	22	30	20
SV Ried	18	4	4	10	14	20	16
Lustenau	19	2	6	11	14	37	12
Vorwarts Steyr	19	1	3	15	15	43	3

BELGIUM

Saturday, November 21

Beveren 1 (Torken 68)
Club Brugge 2 (Claessens 84, Fadiga 87) Att: 8,500

Charleroi 2 (Remy 50, Djim 84)
Ekeren 2 (Hofmans 11, 80) Att: 3,500

Mouscron 2 (Ban 57, Besengez 88)
Westerlo 1 (T. Brogno 15) Att: 6,500

Genk 6 (Strupar 4, 15, 30, 72, Hasi 42, Oulare 82)
Lommel 0 Att: 14,220

Gent 3 (Degryse 6, Collen 50, Martens 82)
Anderlecht 2 (Crasson 18, L. Staelens 52) Att: 8,500

Ostende 0 Lokeren 0 Att: 5,000

Standard 0
Harelbeke 2 (Klamp 7, Baudry pen 84) Att: 9,000

Sunday, November 22

Eendracht Aalst 1 (D. Cooreman 54)
Lierse 4 (Haagdoren 19, Huysmans 42, 75, Brocken 59) Att: 8,500

Kortrijk 2 (Demkine 4, Meert 66)
St Truiden 2 (Teppers pen 35, Fiers 49) Att: 4,500

Saturday, November 28

Anderlecht 3 (L. Staelens 37, Radzinski 59, L. Staelens 82)
Genk 2 (Strupar 22, Oulare 56) Att: 24,022

Lierse 4 (Haagdoren 20, Brocken 31, 62, Cavens 50)
Ostende 2 (Smits 23, De Vuyst 887) Att: 7,000

Lokeren 4 (Snoeckx 2, 82, Boeka-Lisasi 18, Koller 37)
Standard 1 (E. Mpenza 63) Att: 7,500

Lommel 3 (Cannaerts 10, Zouaoui 21, Dekelver 79)
Kortrijk 1 (Demkine 64) Att: 4,000

St Truiden 1 (Fiers 87)
Charleroi 0 Att: 6,000

Sunday, November 29

Club Brugge 0 Mouscron 0 Att: 12,000

Eendracht Aalst 3 (Meyssen 14, Lauwers 54, Van Hoyweghen 76)
Westerlo 2 (T. Brogno 13, 53) Att: 5,000

Ekeren 1 (Milosevic 34)
Beveren 0 Att: 3,000

Harelbeke 2 (Wostijn 21, Verhoene 39)
Gent 2 (Barka 2, Dragutinovic 66) Att: 5,500

Friday, December 4

Westerlo 1 (Thans 10)
Club Brugge 2 (Lembi 39, Borkelmans pen80) Att: 10,000

Saturday, December 5

Charleroi 1 (Remy 30)
Lommel 1 (Mennes 50) Att: 3,000

Mouscron 2 (Vanderhaeghe 7, Van Dooren 66)
Ekeren 2 (Morhaye 10, Sonck 54) Att: 5,500

Gent 2 (Barka 17, Martens 30)
Lokeren 1 (Koller 13) Att: 8,500

Ostende 4 (Windels 14, Van Riel 30, Smits 49, Flies 76)
Eendracht Aalst 1 (De Oliveira 31) Att: 4,000

Sunday, December 6

Genk 2 (T. Gudjonsson 7, N'Sumbu 59)
Harelbeke 2 (Wostijn 27, Camara 78) Att: 11,400

Kortrijk 0
Anderlecht 4 (L. Staelenes 12, 16, Goor 43, Iachtchouck 90) Att: 8,000

Saturday, December 12

Beveren 0
Lommel 0 Att: 3,500

Mouscron 5 (Fiers og 39, Vidovic 52, Pierre 65, Lesjak 79, Van Dooren 80)
St Truiden 1 (Rudonja 12) Att: 6,500

Gent 1 (Barka pen 77)
Lierse 0 Att: 7,500

Standard 3 (Hellers 4, Lukunku 33, Folha 60)
Ostende 0 Att: 15,000

Westerlo 2 (Janssen 46, pen 56)
Ekeren 4 (Herreman 13, Sonck 45, Hofmans 48, 55) Att: 5,000

Sunday, December 13

Club Brugge 0
Eendracht Aalst 0 Att: 9,000

1998-99 UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

In association with MOTOROLA

Juve odds tumble

Italians installed as favourites after scraping into quarter-finals

ANY Juventus fan looking to make a fortune from the bookmakers by backing their team to win the Champions League is in for a disappointment.

Juve reached the quarter-final knockout stage after winning only one of their group games, but were promptly installed as favourites to win the trophy, at a less-than-generous 7-2.

Being drawn against 50-1 outsiders Olympiakos helped to cut Juve's price, but Surrey bookie Colm Fraser said: "OK, Juve drew five games in a row before winning the last, but we feel that they have more talent than any of the other sides.

"A lot can happen between now and March, when the quarter-finals take place, but I doubt if Juve's price will get much better. They're the class outfit, even if they haven't always shown it."

Juve, Galatasary and Rosenborg all finished with eight points in Group B of the qualifiers, with Juve sneaking through on goals. This opened up the possibility of their taking the trophy by winning just that one match, succeeding from now on by away goals and/or penalties. Unlikely, but possible.

All the other five groups had clear finishes, with Kaiserslautern holding a remarkable five-point lead in Group F and earning home-and-away clashes with fellow Germans Bayern Munich.

Bayern had one point to spare over Manchester United in Group D after the teams had drawn in their final match. This left many of the 56,000 crowd complaining about the closing stages, which were played out in a benevolent spirit once the players had realised that 1-1 would do nicely, thank you, enabling United – unbeaten in six matches – to go through as one of the two best losers.

Holders Real Madrid, who gained 12 points to Inter's 13 in Group C, took the other 'losing' place.

Olympiakos finished with 11 points in Group A, their closing draw in Zagreb ruining Croatia Zagreb's hopes.

In Group E, Kyiv Dynamo pulled off perhaps the best performance of the closing match day by winning at Lens by 3-1. This condemned both Lens and Arsenal – despite a 3-1 closing win away to Panathinaikos – to orgies of media flagellation.

David Prole

Winning strike...Filippo Inzaghi was Juventus's goal hero against Rosenborg

6th matchday (Dec 9)

GROUP A

Croatia Zagreb 1 (Jelicic 35)
Olympiakos 1 (Giannakopoulos 64)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Pedersen (Nor)
Croatia: Ladic - Tokic, Biscan (Simic 69), Saric, Simic, Juric, Rukavina, Jdlicic (Jurcic 87), Mujcin, Maric, Mikic (Abramovic 82).
Olympiakos: Eleftheropoulus - Karataidis, Anatolakis, Georgatos, Amanatidis, Poursanidis, Djordjevic, Giannakopoulos (Aleksandris 81), Mavrogenidis, Gogic (Ofori Quaye 84), Niniatis.

FC Porto 3 (Zahovic 55, 73, Drulovic 82)
Ajax 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Collina (Italy)
Porto: Rui Correia - Paulinho Santos, Jorge Costa, Joao Manuel Pinto, Aloisio Alves, Doriva Junior, Carlos Chainho, Panduru (Chippo 53), Zahovic (Rui Barros 85), Drulovic (Mielcarski 89), Jardel.
Ajax: Van der Sar - Mensah, Blind, Oliseh, F De Boer, Rudy (McCarthy 73), Hoekstra, Gorre (Dani 46), Wamberto, R De Boer, Gronkjaer (Babangida 80).

GROUP B

Athletic Bilbao 1 (Guerrero 44)
Galatasaray 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Meier (Swz)
Bilbao: Etxeberria - Felipe, Carlos Garcia, Larrainzar, Larrazabal, Ferreira, Javi Gonzalez (Etxeberria 73), Nagore (Fernandez 84), Jorge Perez (Lasa 72), Guerrero, Ezquerro.
Galatasaray: Taffarel - Popescu, Erdem, Filipescu, Akyel Fatih, Buruk Okan, Kafkas Tolunay (Akdis Burak 63), Kaya Suat (Kormaz Bulent 63), Davala Umit, Sas Hasan (Belozoglu Emre 80), Hagi.

Juventus 2 (Inzaghi 16, Amoruso 35)
Rosenborg 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Van der Ende (Hol)
Juventus: Peruzzi - Tudor, Birindelli, Montero, Pessotto (Davids 64), Conte (Di Livio 88), Deschamps, Tacchinardi, Zidane, Inzaghi, Amoruso (Iuliano 68).
Rosenborg: Jamtfall - Bergdolmo, Bragstad, Hoftun, Pedersen (Hernes 66), Strand, Johnsen (Winsnes 57), Berg, Sorensen (Dahlum 46), Rushfeldt, Jakobsen.

GROUP C

Real Madrid 2 (Raul 33, Savio 65)
Moscow Spartak 1 (Khlestov 89)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 55,000. **Ref:** Vagner (Hun)
Madrid: Illgner - Panucci (Jaime 59), Campo, Hierro, Sanz, Roberto Carlos, Seedorf, Redondo, Mijatovic, Raul, Savio.
Spartak: Filimonov - Parfionov, Ananko, Khlestov, Baranov, Bushmanov, Tsymbalar, Tikhonov, Shirko, Titov, Robson (Kanischev 74).

Sturm Graz 0
Internazionale 2 (Zanetti 64, R Baggio 80)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 14,000. **Ref:** Granat (Pol)
Graz: Sidorczuk - Neukirchner (Prilasnig 77), Milanic (Martens 46), Foda, Schupp, Reinmayr, Haas, Posch, Schopp, Kocijan (Wallner 84), Popovic.
Inter: Pagliuca - Bergomi, Colonnese, Zanetti, Galante, Djorkaeff (Baggio 70), Winter, Ronaldo (Zamorano 61), Ze Elias (Recoba 82), Simeone, Silvestre.

GROUP D

Brondby 0
Barcelona 2 (Luis Figo 4, Rivaldo 34)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 40,892. **Ref:** Levnikov (Rus)
Brondby: Krogh - Skarbalius, Rasmussen, Nielsen, Colding, Bjur, J F Jensen (Thygesen 79), Daugaard (Christensen 69), Bagger (Lindrup 74), Sand, Hansen.
Barcelona: Hesp - Sergi, Reiziger, Okunowo, Cocu (Cuadrado 88), Guardiola, Luis Figo, Celades, Anderson (Giovanni 69), Rivaldo (Roger Garcia 63), Xavi. *Sent off: Guardiola 41min.*

Manchester United 1 (Keane 43)
Bayern Munich 1 (Salihamidzic 56)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 54,334. **Ref:** Jol (Hol)
Man Utd: Schmeichel - Brown, G Neville, Stam, Irwin (Johnsen 46), Beckham, Scholes, Keane, Giggs, Yorke (Butt 64), Cole.
Bayern: Kahn - Strunz, Babbel, Matthaus (Linke 61), Kuffour, Lizarazu, Zickler (Basler 82), Effenberg, Jeremies, Elber (Jancker 82), Salihamidzic.

GROUP E

Lens 1 (Smicer 78)
Kyiv Dynamo 3 (Kaladze 60, Vaschuk 76, Shevchenko 85)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 41,000. **Ref:** Michel (Ska)
Lens: Warmuz - Meride (Brunel 2), Magnier, Dehu, Lachor, Debeve, Nyarko, Dalmat (D Moreira 88), Eloi (Foe 64), Nouma, Smicer. *Sent off: Dehu 6min.*
Kyiv: Shovkovsky - Luzhnyi, Vaschuk, Holovko, Dmytrulin (Kossvskyi 46), Gusin, Kaladze (Kiriukhin 67), Khatskevich, Kardash (Bialkevich 51), Shevchenko, Rebrov.

Panathinaikos 1 (Sypniewski 74)
Arsenal 3 (Asanovic og 65, Anelka 80, Boa Morte 86)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 45,000. **Ref:** Braschi (It)
Panathinaikos: Wandzik - Apostolakis, Milojevic, Lagonikakis, Goumas, Basinas, Kostandinidis (Strandli 69), Kola (Sypniewski 56), Asanovic, Liberopoulos, Warzycha.
Arsenal: Seaman - Grondin, Bould, Vivas, Upson, Grimandi, Boa Morte, Mendez (Black 78), Vernazza, Anelka, Wreh.

GROUP F

Kaiserslautern 5 (Rosler 44, 61, 80, Marschall 49, Rische 85)
HJK Helsinki 2 (Ilola 29, Luiz Antonio 68)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Milton Nielsen (Den)
Kaiserslautern: Reinke - Sforza (Riedl 85), Hrutka, Ibrahim, Ramzy, Ballack (Rische 46), Reich, Buck, Koch (Rosler 38), Marschall, Hristov.
HJK: Viander - Tihinen, Turpeinen, Nylund, Saastamoinen, Ilola, Lehkouso, Kuqi (Luiz Antonio 60), Riihilahti, Kottila (Forsell 83), Piracala (Kopteff 66).

PSV Eindhoven 2 (Khokhlov 41, Van Nistelrooij 88)
Benfica 2 (Nuno Gomes 47pen, 65)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Nilsson (Swe)
PSV: Waterreus - Lucius, Skerla, Abel Xavier, Van der Weerden, Iwan (Rommedahl 72), Van der Doelen (Bruggink 83), Khokhlov, Kolkka (Gakhokidze 72), Van Nistelrooy, Nilis.
Benfica: Ovchinnikov - Andrade, Thomas (Calado 67), El Khalej, Guiara, Minto, Poborsky (Pringle 80), Leal, Pembridge (Basto 87), Joao Pinto, Nuno Gomes.

Group A – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
OLYMPIAKOS	6	3	2	1	8	6	11
Croatia Zagreb	6	2	2	2	5	7	8
FC Porto	6	2	1	3	11	9	7
Ajax	6	2	1	3	4	6	7

Group B – FINAL

JUVENTUS	6	1	5	0	7	5	8
Galatasaray	6	2	2	2	8	8	8
Rosenborg	6	2	2	2	7	8	8
Athletic Bilbao	6	1	3	2	5	6	6

Group C – FINAL

INTERNAZIONALE	6	4	1	1	9	5	13
REAL MADRID	6	4	0	2	17	8	12
Moscow Spartak	6	2	2	2	7	6	8
Sturm Graz	6	0	1	5	2	16	1

Group D – FINAL

BAYERN MUNICH	6	3	2	1	9	6	11
MAN UTD	6	2	4	0	20	11	10
Barcelona	6	2	2	2	11	9	8
Brondby	6	1	0	5	4	18	3

Group E – FINAL

KYIV DYNAMO	6	3	2	1	11	7	11
Lens	6	2	2	2	5	6	8
Arsenal	6	2	2	2	8	8	8
Panathinaikos	6	2	0	4	6	9	6

Group F – FINAL

KAISERSLAUTERN	6	4	1	1	12	6	13
Benfica	6	2	2	2	8	9	8
PSV Eindhoven	6	2	1	3	10	11	7
HJK Helsinki	6	1	2	3	8	12	5

QUARTER-FINAL QUALIFIERS IN CAPITALS

Genk 3 (Origi 9, Oulare 38, 69)
Lokeren 1 (Boeka-Lisasi 28) Att: 14,073

Kortrijk 0 Harelbeke 0 Att: 5,000

Friday, December 18

Lierse 1 (Van Meir 80)
Genk 1 (Ven Geem 41) Att:m 12,000

Saturday, December 19

Oostende 2 (Van Riel 45, Cuffez 50)
Gent 2 (Degryse 65, Barka 71) Att: 5,500

Lokeren 2 (Van Geneuden 13, Zere 20)
Kortrijk 1 (Demkine 21) Att: 6,00

Anderlecht 3 (Radzinski 20, Scifo 70pen, Iachtchouk 84)
Beveren 1 (Zewlakow 78) Att: 18,268

Lommel 2 (Waligora 43, Cannaerts 52)
Mouscron 3 (Ban 32, 70pen, Martic 45) Att: 4,000

St Truiden 0 Westerlo 0 Att: 6,000

Sunday, December 20

Germinal 2
Club Brugge 0

Eendracht Alst 1
Standard 0

Harelbeke 1
Charleroi 1
(Scorers and attendences will be published in full next month)

BELGIUM

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Club Brugge	19	12	4	3	34	18	40
Genk	19	11	5	3	41	23	38
Lokeren	19	10	4	5	40	25	34
Mouscron	19	9	7	3	39	30	34
Standard	18	10	1	7	26	17	31
Gent	19	8	7	4	32	34	31
Anderlecht	18	8	5	5	33	26	29
Germinal	19	8	4	7	34	30	28
Westerlo	19	8	3	8	39	33	27
St Truiden	18	7	6	5	24	21	27
Lierse	18	8	2	8	31	29	26
Aalst	19	7	5	7	30	34	26
Harelbeke	19	4	8	7	23	30	20
Charleroi	18	3	8	7	24	26	17
Beveren	18	4	4	10	19	29	16
Lommel	19	4	4	11	20	31	16
Oostende	19	2	6	11	18	45	12
Kortrijk	19	1	5	13	24	50	8

BELGIAN CUP – 2ND RND

Dec 2: Antwerp 1 Anderlecht 2; Beveren 2 Standard 3; Lokeren 1 Lommel 2; St Truiden 4 Cercle Brugge 0; Lierse 0 Harelbeke 0 (aet) (Lierse on pens)

BULGARIA

Dec 5: Botev 0 Liteks 1; Lok Sofia 3 Spartak Varna 1; Shumen 0 Dobrudzha 0; Pirin 2 Slavia 1; Levski Kjetil 5 Lok Plovdiv 1; Metalurg 4 Septemvri 2; CSKA 2 Minjor 0; Neftochimik 1 Levski Sofia 0

BULGARIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Liteks	15	11	3	1	48	11	36
Levski Sofia	15	9	4	2	31	9	31
Levski Kjetil	15	10	1	4	33	13	31
Slavia	15	7	6	2	25	11	27
Neftochimik	15	8	1	6	22	17	25
CSKA	15	7	4	4	22	22	25
Lok Sofia	15	7	3	5	18	16	24
Minjor	15	6	4	5	19	17	22
Spartak Varna	15	6	0	9	19	27	18
Shumen	15	4	5	6	14	20	17
Metalurg	15	5	1	9	16	24	16
Dobrudzha	15	4	3	8	18	29	15
Botev	15	4	3	8	14	27	15
Pirin	15	4	3	8	12	32	15
Septemvri	15	2	4	9	15	33	10
Lok Plovdiv	15	1	5	9	11	29	8

CROATIA

Dec 6: Osijek 2 Hrv.dragovoljac 1; Zadarkomerc 0 Cibalia 2; Sibenik 3 Slaven 1; Hajduk 3 Varteks 0
Dec 13: Zagreb 1 Osijek 1; Rijeka 2 Hajduk 1; Varteks 7 Sibenik 0; Slaven 1 Zadarkomerc 1; Mladost 127 3 Hrv.dragovoljac 0.
Dec 14: Cibalia 0 Croatia 1.

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	16	12	2	2	33	10	38
Rijeka	16	12	1	3	23	12	37
Hajduk	17	9	6	2	33	14	33
Osijek	17	9	3	5	28	15	30
Varteks	17	6	3	8	26	26	21
Zagreb	16	4	7	5	20	26	19
Hrv.dragovoljac	17	4	6	7	11	16	18
Cibalia	17	4	5	8	15	22	17
Sibenik	17	5	2	10	22	40	17
Zadarkomerc	17	4	4	9	20	30	16
Slaven	17	3	6	8	19	29	15
Mladost 127	16	4	3	9	18	28	15

ENGLAND

Monday, November 16

Nottm Forest 2 (Freedman 57, Van Hooijdonk 62)
Derby 2 (Dorigo pen 56, Carbonari 72) Att: 24,014

Saturday, November 21

Aston Villa 2 (Dublin 47, 63)
Liverpool 4 (Ince 2, Fowler 7, 58, 66) Att: 39,241

Blackburn 0
Southampton 2 (Oakley 4, Basham 89) Att: 22,812

Leicester 2 (Izzet 40, Guppy 60)
Chelsea 4 (Zola 28, 90, Poyet 39, Flo 56) Att: 21,401

Middlesbrough 2 (Gordon 66, Ricard 83)
Coventry 0 Att: 34,293

Sheffield Wed 3 (Alexandersson 14, 73, Jonk 55)
Man Utd 1 (Cole 29) Att: 39,475

Tottenham 2 (Armstrong 59, Nielsen 69)
Nottm Forest 0 Att: 35,832

Wimbledon 1 (Ekoku 77)
Arsenal 0 Att: 26,003

Sunday, November 22

Derby 0
West Ham 2 (Hartson 7, Keller 72) Att: 31,366

Leeds 4 (Hasselbaink 34, Bowyer 51, Smith 67, Kewell 87)
Charlton 1 (Mortimer 65) Att: 32,487

Monday, November 23

Everton 1 (Ball pen 18)
Newcastle 0 Att: 30,357

Saturday, Novembe 28

Charlton 1 (Kinsella 72)
Everton 2 (Cadamarteri 45, 73) Att: 20,043

Chelsea 1 (Zola 27)
Sheffield Wed 1 (Booth 67) Att: 34,451

Coventry 1 (Huckerby 78)
Leicester 1 (Heskey 89) Att: 19,984

Newcastle 3 (Solano 38, Ferguson 59, 90)
Wimbledon 1 (Gayle 34) Att: 36,623

Nottm Forest 2 (Bart-Williams 32, Freedman 44)
Aston Villa 2 (Joachim 58, 63) Att: 25,753

Southampton 0
Derby 1 (Carbonari 33) Att: 14,762

West Ham 2 (Sinclar 39, 46)
Tottenham 1 (Armstrong 72) Att: 26,044

Sunday, November 29

Arsenal 1 (Anelka 89)
Middlesbrough 1 (Deane 6) Att: 38,075

Liverpool 2 (Ince 30, Owen 33)
Blackburn 0 Att: 41,753

Man Utd 3 (Solskjaer 45, Keane 46, Butt 77)
Leeds 2 (Hasselbaink 29, Kewell 52) Att: 55,172

Saturday, December 5

Aston Villa 1 (Joachim 55)
Man Utd 1 (Scholes 47) Att: 39,241

Blackburn 1 (Davies 75)
Charlton 0 Att: 22,568

Derby 0 Arsenal 0 Att: 29,018

Everton 0 Chelsea 0 Att: 36,430

Leeds 4 (Bowyer 8, 61, Molenaar 68, Hasselbaink 79)
West Ham 0 Att: 36,320

Leicester 2 (Heskey 61, Walsh 63)
Southampton 0 Att: 18,423

Tottenham 2 (Fox 26, Carragher og 50)
Liverpool 1 (Berger 55) Att: 36,521

Wimbledon 2 (Euell 71, 83)
Coventry 1 (McAllister pen 54) Att: 11,717

Sunday, December 6

Middlesbrough 2 (Townsend 13, Cooper 59)
Newcastle 2 (Charvet 38, Dabizas 83) Att: 34,629

Monday, December 7

Sheffield Wed 3 (Alexandersson 22, Carbone 53, 58)
Nottm Forest 2 (Bonalair 55, Van Hooijdonk 70) Att: 19,321

Wednesday, December 9

Chelsea 2 (Zola 30, Flo 90)
Aston Villa 1 (Hendrie 32) Att: 34,765

Saturday, December 12

Blackburn 0 Newcastle 0 Att: 27,569

Derby 2 (Carbonari 26, Sturridge 90)
Chelsea 2 (Flo 55, Poyet 59) Att: 29,056

Everton 1 (Bakayoko 31)
Southampton 0 Att: 32,073

Leicester 3 (Heskey 43, Elliott pen 55, Guppy 75)
Nottm Forest 1 (Van Hooijdonk 14) Att: 20,891

Middlesbrough 1 (Deane 40)
West Ham 0 Att: 34,623

Sheffield Wed 3 (Booth 13, Carbone 64, Rudi 77)
Charlton 0 Att: 26,010

Tottenham 2 (Campbell 70, 90)
Man Utd 2 (Solskjaer 11, 18) Att: 36,079

Sunday, December 13

Aston Villa 3 (Joachim 62, Dublin 65, 82)
Arsenal 2 (Bergkamp 14, 45) Att: 39,217

Wimbledon 1 (Gayle 48)
Liverpool 0 Att: 26,080

Monday, December 14

Leeds 2 (Hopkin 40, Bowyer 90)
Coventry 0 Att: 32,000

Wednesday December 16

Man United 1 (Cole 45
Chelsea 1 (Zola 83) Att: 55,159

Saturday, December 19

Chelsea 2 (Poyet 80, Flo 90)
Tottenham 0 Att: 34,881

Coventry 1 (Whelen 16)
Derby 1 (Carsley 50) Att: 16627

Liverpool 2 (Berger 19, Owen 34)
Sheffield Wed 0 Att: 40,003

Man Utd 2 (Butt 62, Scholes 70)
Middlesbrough 3 (Ricard 23, Gordon 31, Deane 59) Att: 55,152

Newcastle 1 (Glass 66)
Leicester Att: 36,718

Nottm Forest 2 (Chettle pen22, Freedman 30)
Blackburn 2 (Blake 49, 90) Att: 22013

Southampton 3 (Ostenstad 11, 68, Kachloul 64)
Wimbledon 1 (Gayle 76) Att: 14,354

West Ham 2 (Keller 19, Sinclair 75)
Everton 1 (Cadermarteri 71) Att: 25,998

Sunday, December 20

Arsenal 3 (Bergkamp 28, Vieira 53, Petit 82)
Leeds 1 (Hasselbaink 66) Att: 38025

Monday, December 21

Charlton 0
Aston Villa 1 (Rufus og3) Att: 20043

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Aston Villa	18	10	6	2	28	17	36
Chelsea	18	8	9	1	29	17	33
Manchester Utd	18	8	7	3	36	23	31
Middlesbrough	18	7	9	2	30	21	30
Leeds	18	7	8	3	29	17	29
Arsenal	18	7	8	3	20	11	29
West Ham	18	8	5	5	22	22	29
Wimbledon	18	7	5	6	23	29	26
Liverpool	18	7	4	7	29	22	25
Newcastle	18	6	6	6	22	21	24
Leicester	18	6	6	6	21	20	24
Derby	18	5	9	4	18	17	24
Tottenham	18	6	5	7	23	28	23
Sheffield Wed	18	6	4	8	20	19	22
Everton	18	5	7	6	12	17	22
Charlton	18	3	7	8	22	28	16
Coventry	18	4	4	10	15	26	16
Blackburn	18	3	5	10	17	26	14
Southampton	18	3	4	11	15	35	13
Nottingham	18	2	6	10	17	32	12

LEAGUE CUP – QUARTER-FINALS

Dec 1: Sunderland 3 Luton 0; Wimbledon 2 Chelsea 1
Dec 2: Leicester 1 Blackburn 0; Tottenham 3 Man Utd 1

FRANCE

Thursday, November 19

Monaco 0
Bordeaux 2 (Laslandes 6, Micoud 39) Att: 5,000

Lyon 2 (Linares 17, Violeau 56)
Marseille 1 (Maurice 77) Att: 40,000

Friday, November 20

Auxerre 1 (Klos 83)
Metz 0 Att: 5,600

Lens 1 (Debecve 90)
Bastia 0 Att: 28,000

Lorient 1 (Loko 26)
Toulouse 0 Att: 10,000

Nancy 1 (Cascarino 90)
Le Havre 0 Att: 6,440

Nantes 1 (Decroix 37)
Montpellier 1 (Silvestre 11) Att: 20,000

Paris SG 2 (Rabesandratana 38, J. Leroy 67)
Rennes 1 (Nonda 65) Att: 42,600

Sochaux 1 (Fiawoo 73)
Strasbourg 1 (Arpinon 55) Att: 8,000

Saturday, November 28

Bastia 4 (Jurietti 17, Nee 23, Andre pen 69, 73)
Lyon 1 (Grassi 43) Att: 8,000

Le Havre 2 (Mamouni 51, Becanovic 52)
Auxerre 1 (Deniaud 19) Att: 10,000

Lorient 0
Nancy 1 (Wiart 44) Att: 8,000

Metz 3 (Rodriguez 45, Lukic 56, 77)
Montpellier 1 (Pierre og 49) Att: 14,420

Rennes 2 (Nonda 25, Gregoire 44)
Nantes 3 (Sibierski 30, Suffo 83, Le Roux 88) Att: 19,248

Strasbourg 1 (Cristanval 22)
Monaco 1 (Martins 34) Att: 21,200

Toulouse 1 (Petrovic 70)
Sochaux 1 (B. Bouger 74) Att: 10,638

Sunday, November 29

Bordeaux 1 (Micoud 59)
Lens 0 Att: 22,000

Marseille 0 Paris SG 0 Att: 58,500

Thursday, December 3

Monaco 3 (Trezeguet 36, 48, Ikpeba 45)
Nancy 0 Att: 2,500

Lyon 2 (Caveglia 51, Dhorasoo 72)
Bordeaux 1 (Wiltord 81) Att: 20,000

Friday, December 4

Auxerre 1 (Carnot pen 85)
Marseille 1 (Blanc 60) Att: 22,000

Lens 3 (Smicer 50, Nyarko 55, Eloi 79)
Strasbourg 0 Att: 30,200

Metz 0 Rennes 0 Att: 12,000

Montpellier 2 (Silvestre 65, 75)
Le Havre 0 Att: 10,000

Nantes 2 (Da Rocha 18, 50)
Bastia 0 Att: 16,606

Paris SG 0 Toulouse 0 Att: 35,000

Sochaux 0
Lorient 1 (Fischer 15) Att: 2,000

Friday, December 11

Rennes 3 (Nonda 25, Bardon 84, Gousse 89)
Montpellier 2 (Thimothee 43, Delaye 76) Att: 18,000

Strasbourg 2 (Conteh 35, Bertin pen 87)
Nantes 2 (Fabbri 6, Monterubio 55) Att: 12,580

Saturday, December 12

Bastia 2 (Nee 2, 44)
Paris SG 0 Att: 6,000

Bordeaux 3 (Laslandes 7, 69, Benarbia 14)
Le Havre 0 Att: 17,000

Lorient 1 (Loko 68)
Lens 1 (Foe 17) Att: 11,000

Nancy 1 (Meniri 42)
Auxerre 1 (Jeunechamp 89) Att: 12,000

Marseille 3 (Camara 29, Maurice 45, Gourvennec 90)
Metz 0 Att: 46,317

Toulouse 0 Lyon 0 Att: 13,000

Tuesday, December 15

Metz 4 (Jestrovic 13, 58, 60, Lukic 71pen)
Bastia 0 Att: 14,717

Auxerre 3 (Merlet 56, 65, Deniaud 72)
Bordeaux 1 (Laslandes 1)

Wednesday, December 16

Le Havre 2 (Weiser 10og, Nalis 53)
Rennes 0 Att: 10,103

PSG 0 Strasbourg 0 Att: 35,435

Nantes 2 (Fabbri 39, Da Rochar 52)
Nancy 0 Att: 20,000

Montpellier 0
Marseille 1 (Maurice 41) Att: 30,112

Monaco 1 (Konjic 66)
Toulouse 1 (Malm 85) Att: 4,000

Lens 1 (Nouma 43)
Sochaux 1 (Flachez 25) Att: 30,641

Lyon 2 (Fischer 47og, Linares 81)
Lorient 2 (Pedron 25, Loko 32) Att: 15,000

Saturday, December 19

Sochaux 1 (B Bouger 43)
Nantes 1 (Fabbri 70) Att: 8,000

Monaco 0
Lyon 1 (Bak 23) Att: 4,000

Marseille 2 (Pires 32, 70)
Le Havre 0 Att: 44,000

Bastia 2 (Alves 48, Laurent 87)
Auxerre 0 Att: 8,000

Bordeaux 6 (Micaud 37, 90, Wiltord 47, Laslandes 55, 58, 76)
Metz 0 Att: 20,000

Strasbourg 1 (Conteh 60)
Rennes 1 (Bardon 35) Att: 10,000

Toulouse 2 (Preget 10, Oceano 52)
Montpellier 5 (Robert 29, 48, 74, Thimothee 44, Richet 52) Att: 12,000

Lorient 2 (Loko 39pen, 77)
Paris SG 0 Att: 15,000

Nancy 0
Lens 1 (Foe 17) Att: 12,000

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Marseille	20	14	5	1	37	13	47
Bordeaux	20	14	2	4	43	17	44
Lyon	20	8	8	4	26	19	32
Rennes	20	9	5	6	25	24	32
Nantes	20	8	7	5	27	22	31
Bastia	20	9	2	9	26	24	29
Monaco	19	8	4	7	27	19	28
Lens	20	8	4	8	28	25	28
Montpellier	20	8	3	9	37	34	27
Auxerre	20	7	6	7	24	25	27
Paris SG	20	6	7	7	18	17	25
Strasbourg	20	5	9	6	17	21	24
Metz	20	5	7	8	18	28	22
Nancy	20	5	6	9	18	26	21
Lorient	20	4	7	9	17	27	19
Le Havre	20	4	6	10	14	26	18
Sochaux	19	3	7	9	16	34	16
Toulouse	20	2	9	9	14	31	15

GERMANY

Friday, November 20

Eintracht Frankfurt 0
Werder Bremen 2 (Herzog 47, Bogdanovic 73) Att: 27,500

Schalke 2 (Ejkelkamp 37, Goossens 59)
Duisburg 0 Att: 30,000

Saturday, November 21

Bochum 1 (Reis 63)
Bayer Leverkusen 5 (Beinlich 15, Zivkovic 43, Rink 61, Heintze 72, N. Kovac 79) Att: 20,128

Hertha 1 (Preetz 68)
Bayern Munich 0 Att: 75,000

Kaiserslautern 1 (Reich 78)
Borussia Dortmund 0 Att: 41,500

Nurnberg 1 (Skoog 64)
Wolfsburg 1 (Juskowiak 86) Att: 22,200

Stuttgart 1 (Lisztes 33)
Hansa Rostock 1 (Breitkreutz 61) Att: 17,000

Munich 1860 0 Hamburg 0 Att: 27,500

Sunday, November 22

Borussia MG 3 (Klinkert 17, Hagner 33, Polster 48)
Freiburg 1 (Wassmer 3) Att: 25,300

Tuesday, November 24

Borussia Dortmund 2 (Salou 27, Jepsen 58)
Hamburg 1 (Kohler 88) Att: 67,000

Schalke 1 (Van Kerckhoven 87)
Werder Bremen 2 (Todt 55, Herzog 59) Att: 30,300

Friday, November 27

Borussia Dortmund 3 (Chapuisat 13, Salou 63, Moller 75)
Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Weber 53) Att: 63,500

Hansa Rostock 1 (Yasser 89)
Hertha Berlin 2 (Veit 51, Preetz 55) Att: 14,000

Saturday, November 28

Bayer Leverkusen 2 (Rink 1, Emerson 60)
Duisburg 0 Att: 22,500

Bayern Munich 2 (Elber 36, Lizarazu 63)
Nurnberg 0 Att: 63,000

Freiburg 2 (Iaschwili 9, 42)
Stuttgart 0 Att: 22,500

Hamburg 3 (Yeboah 7, 28, 86)
Borussia MG 0 Att: 26,500

Werder Bremen 4 (Bode 6, 62, Roembiak 83, Herzog pen 88)
Munich 1860 1 (Ouakili 42) Att: 27,000

Wolfsburg 4 (Juskowiak 2, 20, Prager 76, Greiner 77)
Bochum 1 (Ion 36) Att: 15,000

Sunday, November 29

Kaiserslautern 4 (Hristov 9, Roser 67, Hrutka 71, Marschall pen 74)
Schalke 1 (Max 34) Att: 41,500

Friday, December 4

Bochum 2 (Hofmann 3, Kuntz pen 87)
Bayern Munich 2 (Jancker 45, Strunz 88pen) Att: 33,063

Nurnberg 2 (Circi 21, 43)
Hansa Rostock 2 (Ramdane 44, Agali 86) Att: 23,600

Saturday, December 5

Bayer Leverkusen 3 (Kirsten 21, 26, Ze Roberto 54)
Wolfsburg 0 Att: 22,200

Eintracht 1 (Fjortoft 80)
Schalke 2 (Van Hoogdalem 21, Kmetsch 38) Att: 33,000

Stuttgart 3 (Akpoborie 43, 46, 51)
Hamburg 1 (Hollerbach 37) Att: 25,000

Sunday, December 6

Munich 1860 2 (Schroth 34, 82)
Borussia Dortmund 0 Att: 23,700

Tuesday, December 8

Borussia MG 0
Werder Bremen 1 (Bode 23) Att: 22,000

Friday, December 11

Borussia Dortmund 1 (But 18)
Borussia MG 1 (Polster 24) Att: 67,500

Hamburg 0
Hertha Berlin 4 (Reiss 22, Wosz 50, Tretschok 79, Preetz 83) Att: 20,118

Saturday, December 12

Freiburg 1 (Kobiaschwili 36)
Nurnberg 0 Att: 22,500

Hansa Rostock 3 (Neuville 21, 86, Majak 78)
Bochum 0 Att: 9,500

Kaiserslautern 2 (Ballack 4, Ramzy 90)
Eintracht Frankfurt 1 (Stojak 74) Att: 41,500

Schalke 2 (Kmetsch 73, Kurz og 89)
Munich 1860 2 (Schroth 45, Cerny 49) Att: 36,185

Werder Bremen 2 (Trares 62, Boda 65)
Stuttgart 2 (Schneider 21, Bobic 69) Att: 26,377

Wolfsburg 4 (Dammeier 40, Akonnor 48, Jukowiak 69, 90)
Duisburg 2 (Nowak og 52, Spies 75) Att: 12,935

Sunday, December 13

Bayern Munich 2 (Tarnat 20, Elber 30)
Bayer Leverkusen 0 Att: 36,000

Wednesday, December 15

Hertha Berlin 1 (Preetz 27)
Freiburg 0 Att: 34,037

Thursday, December 16

Duisburg 3 (Beierle 48, Tofting 64, Andersen 90)
Kaiserslautern 1 (Rosler 40) Att: 14,700

Borussia MG 0
Bayern Munich 2 (Effenberg 8, 27pen) Att: 34,500

Friday, December 18

Freiburg 1 (Baya 50)
Bochum 1 (Schindzierlorz 90) Att: 22,500

Borussia Dortmund 3 (Herrlich 38, But 48, Salou 69)
Stuttgart 0 Att: 61,000

Saturday, December 19

Bayern Munich 3 (Jancker 40, Elber 86, Salihamidzic 90)
Wolfsburg 0 Att: 39,000

Hansa Rostock 1 (Neuville 72)
Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Zivkovic 29) Att: 12,000

Hamburg 2 (Gravesen 53pen, Grubac 90pen)
Nuremberg 0 Att: 19,200

Schalke 1 (Wilmots 77)
Borussia MG 0 Att: 41,800

Kaiserslautern 1 (Reich 60)
Munich 1860 1 (Winkler 51) Att: 41,500

Eintracht Frankfurt 0 Duisburg 0 Att: 17,000

Sunday, December 20

Werder Bremen 2
Hertha Berlin 1

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern Munich	18	14	2	2	43	13	44
Leverkusen	18	10	6	2	40	18	36
Kaiserslautern	18	10	4	4	29	28	34
Munich 1860	18	9	5	4	32	24	32
Dortmund	18	8	5	5	28	18	29
Hertha Berlin	18	9	2	7	26	19	29
Wolfsburg	18	7	6	5	34	28	27
Hamburg	18	6	6	6	23	23	24
Werder Bremen	18	6	5	7	27	25	23
Freiburg	18	5	7	6	21	23	22
Stuttgart	18	5	6	7	23	25	21
Schalke	18	5	6	7	20	29	21
Duisburg	18	4	7	7	20	29	19
Bochum	18	5	4	9	22	33	19
Eintracht Frankfurt	18	4	5	9	21	29	17
Hansa Rostock	18	3	7	8	26	34	16
Nurnberg	18	2	9	7	20	33	15
Borussia MG	18	2	4	12	20	44	10

GERMAN CUP – QUARTER-FINALS

Dec 1: Bayern Munich 3 Stuttgart 0
Dec 2: Oberhausen 2 Borussia MG 0
Sportl Siegen 1 Wolfsburg 3
Werder Bremen 2 TeBe Berlin 1

GREECE

Nov 30: Xanthi 1 Panathinaikos 0.
Dec 5: Olympiakos 4 Panathinaikos 2.
Dec 6: Iraklis 2 Panionios 0; Paniliakos 1 Proodeytiki 2; Ethnikos P 1 Xanthi 1; OFI 1 Ethnikos A 1; Veroia 1 PAOK 2; Kavala 2 AEK 1; Apollon 1 Aris 3.
Dec 7: Eleysina 1 Ionikos 1.
Dec 12: Xanthi 0 Iraklis 0.
Dec 13: Panionios 0 Proodeytiki 0; Ethnikos A 1 Paniliakos 0; PAOK 3 OFI 1; AEK 2 Panathinaikos 0; Ionikos 1 Veroia 0; Apollon 1 Kavala 1; Aris 0 Eleysina 0.
Dec 14: Olympiakos 2 Ethnikos P 0.
Dec 20: Eleysina 1 Kavala 1; Proodeytiki 3 Ethnikos A 0; Paniliakos 1 PAOK 2; OFI 2 Ionikos 1; Panathinaikos 5 Apollon 0.
Dec 21: Veroia 0 Aris 1; Iraklis 0 Olympiakos 2; Ethnikos P 1 AEK 4; Xanthi 1 Panionios 0.

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Olympiakos	14	11	1	2	37	11	34
AEK	14	10	2	2	32	11	32
PAOK	14	9	2	3	25	16	29
Panathinaikos	14	9	1	4	29	18	28
Xanthi	14	8	4	2	16	9	28
Aris	14	7	3	4	18	18	24
OFI	14	7	2	5	19	16	23
Ionikos	14	6	2	6	24	18	20
Ethnikos A	14	6	2	6	21	22	20
Iraklis	14	5	4	5	22	15	19
Panionios	14	5	2	7	27	20	17
Kavala	14	4	5	5	24	31	17
Paniliakos	14	5	1	8	18	23	16
Proodeytiki	14	3	4	7	15	21	13
Eleysina	14	2	7	5	10	17	13
Veroia	14	1	4	9	5	21	7
Apollon	14	1	4	9	15	40	7
Ethnikos P	14	0	4	10	4	34	4

HOLLAND

Friday, November 20

MVV 0
NEC 3 (Koning 55, Ellerman 78, Tumani 90) Att: 4,000

Feyenoord 4 (Dijkhuizen 40, Cruz 43, 85, Van Vossen 90)
Cambuur 0 Att: 23,900

De Graafschap 1 (Mitrita og 78)
Heerenveen 1 (Mitrita 76) Att: 7,500

NAC 1 (Stewart 65)
Fortuna 1 (Hamming 9) Att: 9,603

Roda JC 3 (Nygaard 16, 64, Vrede 62)
Vitesse 1 (Booth 9) Att: 7,000

Twente 5 (Bosman 2, 86, Ter Avest 12, Oude Kamphuis 53, Vennegoor 70)
Willem II 1 (Bombarda 79) Att: 12,500

PSV 5 (Xavier 22, Van Nistelrooy 44, 51, Fuchs 49, De Bilde 80)
Utrecht 0 Att: 26,600

RKC 0
Ajax 1 (Blind 8) Att: 6,000

Sparta 0
AZ 0 Att: 4,500

Tuesday, November 24

Heerenveen 1 (Samardzic 12)
Cambuur 1 (Van der Heide 70) Att: 13,870

Friday, November 27

Cambuur 3 (Van Rijswijk 54, Muller 62, 64)
Fortuna 1 (Simons 28) Att: 7,500

Roda JC 2 (Nygaard 66, Van der Luer 77)
MVV 1 (Joordens 31) Att: 7,000

PSV 2 (Nilis 36, 39)
De Graafschap 2 (Viscaal 4, 74) Att: 27,500

Sparta 1 (Tammer 71)
Feyenoord 2 (Tomasson 15, Cruz 870 Att: 7,500

Utrecht 2 (Van der Gaag 82, Kuyt 90)
Willem II 0 Att: 13,000

Vitesse 3 (Machlas 4, Jochemsen 11, Booth 45)
Ajax 2 (Blind 68, Frank de Boer 86) Att: 25,800

Tuesday, December 1

Heerenveen 3 (De Visser 52, Talan 64, Samardzic 82)
PSV 3 (Nilis 32, Khokhlov 44, Iwan 46) Att: 13,870

Wednesday, December 2

AZ 1 (Mutsaers 33)
Roda JC 0 Att: 7,270

Cambuur 1 (Dijkhuizen 29)
Utrecht 1 (Mols 71) Att: 8,000

NEC 3 (Renfurm 8, De Gier 35, 52)
Sparta 1 (Jalink 41) Att: 5,000

Thursday, December 3

Fortuna 3 (Bouma 86, 88, Hamming 90)
RKC 2 (De Graef 53, Hoogendorp 82) Att: 5,000

Friday, December 4

Willem II 3 (Bombarda 3, Galasek 55, Sanou 66)
Vitesse 5 (Machlas 65, Zongo 73, 90, Reuser 75, Laros 84) Att: 10,800

Sunday, December 6

Ajax 1 (Oliseh 83)
MVV 1 (Perez 49) Att: 35,000

AZ 1 (Van Galen 13)
Twente 1 (Ter Avest 15) Att: 7,265

Feyenoord 1 (Maes 87)
NEC 0 Att: 23,000

NAC 3 (Arveladze 4, Shoukov 30, Bosz 90)
PSV 4 (Khokhlov 24, Nilis 45, Van Nistelrooy 65, Bruggink 72) Att: 11,500

Sparta 1 (Van der Laan 45)
Cambuur 2 (De Vries 25, Van Rijswijk 26) Att: 3,500

Utrecht 2 (John de Jong 9, Mols 51)
De Graafschap 1 (Gerritsen 7) Att: 12,000

Thursday, December 10

RKC 0
Feyenoord 5 (Paauwe 21, Cruz 37, Tomasson 64, Kalou 66, Bosvelt 83) Att: 6,200

Friday, December 11

MVV 3 (Heubach 34, Perez 43, Landzaat 47)
Fortuna 3 (Heering 30, Hamming 68, Kool 71) Att: 7,000

Saturday, December 12

PSV 3 (Van Nistelrooy 10, 46, Nilis 73)
Roda JC 3 (Peeters 31, Lawal 85, Nygaard 86) Att: 26,500

Willem 1 (Ramzi 90)
NEC 0 Att: 11,375

Sunday, December 13

Ajax 0 Heerenveen 0 Att: 31,234

AZ 4 (Huiberts 36, 63, Van Galen 79, 88)
Utrecht 3 (De Jong 11, Mols 51, Groenendijk 72) Att: 8,275

De Graafschap 0
NAC 1 (Schreuder 25) Att: 7,050

Sparta 4 (Marilia 23, Tammer 53, Den Dunnen 75, Krijgsman 90)
Twente 2 (Vennegoor 15, Ajoupov 89) Att: 3,500

Vitesse 1 (Amoah 86)
Feyenoord 1 (Van Gastel 90) Att: 25,800

Wednesday, December 16

NAC 2
Cambuur 3

NEC 1
Waalwijk 1

Roda JC 2
Twente 0

Friday, December 18

Heerenveen 1 (El Khattabi 51)
MVV 1 (Emerson 70) Att: 13,870

Saturday, December 19

Twente 0
Vitesse Arnhem 0 Att: 13,200

PSV 1 (Bruggink 61)
Willem II 0 Att: 26,200

De Graafschap 1 (Lindenbergh 44)
AZ 1 (Huiberts 21) Att: 7,850

Sunday, December 20

Feyenoord 1 (Van Wonderen 72)
Ajax 1 (McCarthy 38) Att: 45,000

RKC 2 (Lanckohr 9, Van Arum 57)
NAC 1 (Van As 17) Att: 4,250)

Utrecht 4 (Robbemond 4, 25, Kuyt 7, Martel 77)
Sparta 1 (Van der Hoeven 57) Att: 13,500

NEC 0
Fortuna 3 (Roest 13, Simons 41, Hamming 50) Att: 11,000

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Feyenoord	18	13	4	1	42	15	43
Vitesse	19	11	4	4	36	23	37
Ajax	19	9	7	3	36	16	34
Heerenveen	18	9	6	3	28	19	33
PSV	19	8	7	4	45	34	31
Roda JC	18	9	4	5	30	22	31
Twente	19	8	6	5	29	24	30
AZ	19	6	10	3	28	26	28
NEC	19	7	6	6	28	27	27
Utrecht	19	7	4	8	35	35	25
Willem II	19	7	4	8	31	35	25
Cambuur	19	5	6	8	22	34	21
MVV	19	5	5	9	23	32	20
De Graafschap	19	3	9	7	19	30	18
Fortuna	19	4	5	10	22	35	17
Sparta	19	4	3	12	22	39	15
NAC Breda	18	3	4	11	22	32	13

ITALY

Saturday, November 21

Bologna 1 (Binotto 87)
Perugia 1 (Rapajic 37) Att: 25,341

Cagliari 1 (Kallon 77)
Parma 0 Att: 17,872

Roma 1 (Totti pen 82)
Bari 1 (Masinga 76) Att: 47,466

Sunday, November 22

Fiorentina 3 (Padalino 5, Batistuta 16, Heinrich 75)
Inter 1 (Djorakaeff pen 3) Att: 40,873

Juventus 0
Empoli 0 Att: 44,460

Milan 1 (Leonardo 90)
Lazio 0 Att: 45,985

Salernitana 1 (Bilica og 20)
Venezia 0 Att: 29,098

Sampdoria 0
Vicenza 0 Att: 16,849

Udinese 1 (Poggi 41)
Piacenza 0 Att: 18,760

Sunday, November 29

Bari 0
Fiorentina 0 Att: 23,207

Bologna 3 (Paramatti 3, Signori 9, Fontolan 29)
Juventus 0 Att: 36,335

Empoli 1 (Carparelli 31)
Vicenza 0 Att: 14,247

Inter 2 (Simeone 76, Zanetti 90)
Salernitana 1 (Di Michele 43) Att: 67,167

Lazio 3 (Mancini 28, 56, Salas pen 69)
Roma 3 (Delvecchio 25, Di Francesco 78, Totti 81) Att: 78,882

Parma 4 (Chiesa 25, Crespo 36, 60, Boghossian 90)
Milan 0 Att: 27,641

Perugia 2 (Nakata 20, 50)
Piacenza 0 Att: 13,427

Udinese 2 (Bachini 32, Amoroso 65)
Cagliari 1 (De Patre 87) Att: 22,187

Venezia 0
Sampdoria 0 Att: 9,391

Saturday, December 5

Fiorentina 1 (Batistuta 56)
Bologna 0 Att: 32,730

Roma 5 (Totti 61, Conti 63, Delvecchio 77, 79, Gautieri 90)
Perugia 1 (Rapajic 33) Att: 48,554

Sampdoria 0
Parma 2 (Chiesa 45, 46) Att: 21,646

Sunday, December 6

Cagliari 0
Venezia 1 (Zanoncelli og 67) Att: 17,358

Juventus 0
Lazio 1 (Salas 83) Att: 46,000

Milan 3 (Weah 22, Leonardo 40, Bierhoff 62)
Udinese 0 Att: 45,000

Piacenza 0 Empoli 0 Att: 8,284

Salernitana 2 (Vannucchi 12, Bolic 67)
Bari 2 (Osmanovski 42, Knudsen 87) Att: 32,688

Vicenza 1 (Luiso pen 21)
Inter 1 (Silvestre 90) Att: 17,479

Sunday, December 13

Bari 2 (Innocenti 24, Zambrotta 56)
Empoli 1 (Carparelli 16) Att: 15,334

Bologna 1 (Signori 16)
Salernitana 1 (Paramatti og 31) Att: 26,533

Fiorentina 1 (Batistuta 59)
Juventus 0 Att: 48,000

Lazio 5 (Mihajlovic 29, 44, 52, Stankovic 83, Salas 90)
Sampdoria 2 (Palmieri pen 37, 55) Att: 42,676

Milan 1 (Weah 84)
Vicenza 0 Att: 46,258

Parma 1 (Crespo 40)
Roma 1 (Gautieri 62) Att: 26,927

Perugia 2 (Rapajic 37, Maspero 90)
Cagliari 1 (Berretta 89) Att: 13,273

Udinese 0
Inter 1 (Ronaldo 87) Att: 26,180

Venezia 0 Piacenza 0 Att: 8,499

Sunday, December 20

Cagliari 0
Bologna 1 (Signori 50)

Empoli 3 (Pane 9, Di Napoli 23, 90)
Parma 5 (Crespo 10, Boghossian 45, Fuser 55, 90, Fiore 82)

Juventus 3 (F Inzaghi 20, 29, 87)
Salernitana 0

Lazio 3 (Mancini 17, 55, Salas 90)
Udinese 1 (Locatelli 5)

Perugia 2 (Rapaic 1, Nakata 90)
Fiorentina 2 (Robbiati 10, Batistuta 74)

Piacenza 3 (Piovani 20, Stroppa 42, Rastelli 89)
Bari 2 (Masinga 37, Innocenti 90)

Sampdoria 2 (Palmieri 57, Ortega 86)
Milan 2 (Leonardo 39, Bierhoff 73)

Vicenza 0 Venezia 0

Inter 4 (Cauet 59, Zamorano 77, R Baggio 87, Zanetti 89)
Roma 1 (Paulo Sergio 38)

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fiorentina	14	9	2	3	26	14	29
Parma	14	7	5	2	23	9	26
Milan	14	7	4	3	21	16	25
Inter	14	7	3	4	26	20	24
Roma	14	6	5	3	28	18	23
Lazio	14	6	5	3	27	18	23
Bologna	14	5	6	3	17	11	21
Juventus	14	6	3	5	15	14	21
Perugia	14	5	4	5	20	24	19
Bari	14	3	9	2	16	15	18
Piacenza	14	4	4	6	18	18	16
Udinese	14	4	4	6	16	24	16
Cagliari	14	4	2	8	19	20	14
Sampdoria	14	3	5	6	14	27	14
Empoli	14	3	5	6	12	20	12
Vicenza	14	2	6	6	8	17	12
Salernitana	14	3	3	8	11	23	12
Venezia	14	2	5	7	5	14	11

PORTUGAL

Friday, November 20

Guimaraes 3 (Marcio Theodoro 48, Gilmar 52, Evandro 61)
Rio Ave 0

Saturday, November 21

FC Porto 3 (Chainho 16, Jardel 39, 54)
Benfica 1 (Kandaurov 56)

Sporting Braga 3 (Silva 16, 35, 38)
Vitoria Setubal 0

Sunday, November 22

Alverca 0
Estrela Amadora 1 (Gilberto 9)

Boavista 2 (Timofte 18, Jorge Couto 72)
Sporting Lisbon 2 (Simao 23, Jordanov 55)

Maritimo 1 (Bunbury 44)
Beira Mar 1 (Cristiano 47)

Salgueiros 2 (Deco 21, Cao 33)
Chaves 0

Farense 2 (King 29, Hassan Nader 68)
Campomaiorense 1 (Demetrios 62)

Uniao Leiria 1 (Bakero 60)
Academica 0

Saturday, November 28

Sporting Lisbon 2 (Krpan 31, Simao pen 86)
Uniao Leiria 0

Sunday, November 29

Beira Mar 0 Guimaraes 0

Campomaiorense 0
Benfica 5 (Nuno Gomes 25, pen 77, Hugo Leal 42, 43, Kandaurov 75)

Chaves 1 (Leninton 82)
Sporting Braga 2 (Silva 21, Luis Miguel 88)

Estrela Amadora 2 (Gilberto pen 30, Vitor Vieira 63)
Boavista 1 (Quevedo 15)

Rio Ave 0 Alverca 0

Farense 0 Maritimo 0

Monday, November 30

Vitoria Setubal 1 (Helio 61)
FC Porto 2 (Jardel 51, 90)

Friday, December 4

Benfica 2 (Pembridge 5, Nuno Gomes 48)
Vitoria Setubal 0

Salgueiros 2 (Fernando Almeida 12, Joao Pedro 37)
Sporting Lisbon 1 (Cao og 57)

Saturday, December 5

FC Porto 1 (Jardel 44)
Chaves 0

Sunday, December 6

Alverca 1 (Joao Soares 87)
Beira Mar 1 (Andre 90)

Boavista 1 (Timofte 21)
Rio Ave 0

Maritimo 0
Campomaiorense 1 (Rene 23)

Uniao Leiria 0
Estrela Amadora 1 (Gilberto 70)

Guimaraes 1 (Marcio Teodoro 90)
Farense 0

Monday, December 7

Sporting Braga 2 (Gamboa 53, 79)
Academica 2 (Maurico 88, Dario 90)

Saturday, December 12

Sporting 4 (Duscher 41, 61, Jordanov 75, Rui Jorge 90)
Sporting Braga 1 (Idalecio 38)

Sunday, December 13

Beira Mar 1 (Fary 16)
Boavista 1 (Isaias 90)

Campomaiorense 1 (Isaias 87)
Vitorial Setubal 2 (Chiquinho 46, Helio 76)

Maritimo 1 (Dani Diaz 78)
Guimaraes 0

Rio Ave 1 (Gama 18)
Uniao Leiria 0

Farense 1 (Carlos Costa 76)
Alverca 0

Friday , December 18

Boavista 3 (Timofte 12, Kwame 34, 73)
Farense 0

Saturday, December 19

Campomaiorense 1 (Isaias 64)
Vitoria Guimaraes 0

FC Porto 3 (Doriva 35, 60, 62)
Sporting 2 (Edmilson 13, Gabriel 81)

Sunday, December 20

Salgueiros 5 (Carlos Ferreira 6, 39, Mario Deco 60, Joao Pedro 73, Abilio Novais 90pen)
Rio Ave 1 (Sergio China 8)

Alverca 3 (Filipe Azevedo 57, Caju Neves 61, 67)
Maritimo 0

Uniao Leiria 1 (Reinaldo Silva 37)
Beira Mar 0

Vitoria Setubal 1 (Chiquinho Conde 30)
Chaves 0

Benfica 3 (Poborsky 30, Nuno Gomes 54, 61pen)
Academica 0

Braga 1 (Elpidio Silva 4)
Estrela Amadora 1 (Roberto Assis 87)

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
FC Porto	16	12	2	2	37	15	38
Boavista	16	10	5	1	27	11	35
Benfica	16	10	3	3	35	11	33
Sporting	16	9	5	2	31	14	32
Estrela Amadora	16	8	5	3	20	16	29
Uniao Leiria	16	8	3	5	16	11	27
Salgueiros	16	6	7	3	24	20	25
Setubal	16	6	3	7	15	22	21
Rio Ave	16	5	4	7	13	23	19
Braga	16	4	6	6	22	30	18
Guimaraes	16	4	5	7	20	17	17
Alverca	16	3	8	5	14	18	17
Farense	16	5	2	9	13	23	17
Campomaiorense	16	4	3	9	16	27	15
Beira Mar	16	2	8	6	10	17	14
Maritimo	16	2	6	8	13	21	12
Chaves	16	3	3	10	15	30	12
Academica	16	2	4	10	16	31	10

ROMANIA

Dec 5: Ceahlaul 2 Foresta 1; Resita 3 U Craiova 2; Farul 3 Gloria 1; Onesti 0 Arges 3; Bacau 2 Olimpia 1; Petrolul 1 National 3; Rapid 3 U Cluj 0; Steaua 1 Astra 0.
Dec 6: Otelul 2 Dinamo 1.

ROMANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rapid	17	14	2	1	40	10	44
Dinamo	17	13	2	2	57	15	41
Steaua	17	10	4	3	31	15	34
National	17	11	0	6	37	24	33
Arges	17	10	2	5	34	19	32
Bacau	17	8	7	2	23	17	31
Otelul	17	9	1	7	26	19	28
Petrolul	17	8	2	7	26	24	26
Astra	17	7	4	6	20	15	25
Gloria	17	6	3	8	28	33	21
Ceahlaul	17	6	3	8	23	31	21
Onesti	17	6	3	8	25	35	21
Farul	17	6	1	10	20	32	19
U Craiova	17	4	5	8	20	24	17
Resita	17	3	6	8	13	36	15
Olimpia	17	2	3	12	13	34	9
U Cluj	17	2	3	12	10	43	9
Foresta	17	1	3	13	19	39	6

SCOTLAND

Saturday, November 21

Aberdeen 0
St Johnstone 1 (Simao 38) Att: 10,044

Celtic 5 (Moravcik 11, 49, Larsson 51, 57, Burchill 89)
Rangers 1 (Van Bronckhorst 53) Att: 59,703)

Dundee Utd 0
Dundee 1 (Grady 82) Att: 11,230

Hearts 2 (Flogel 61, McCann 90)
Dunfermline 1 (Edinho 18) Att: 13,268

Kilmarnock 0
Motherwell 0 Att: 10,176

Saturday, November 28

Aberdeen 0
Dundee Utd 3 (Olofsson 17, Miller 49, Easton 56) Att: 11,964

Celtic 2 (Larsson 40, O'Donnell 46)
Motherwell 0 Att: 54,227

Dunfermline 0
Kilmarnock 3 (Durran 32, 56, Holt 77) Att: 5,608

Saturday, December 5

Dundee Utd 1 (Dodds 53)
St Johnstone 1 (Grant pen 55) Att: 7,293

Rangers 1 (Van Bronckhorst 16)
Dunfermline 1 (Petrie 76) Att: 47,465

Kilmarnock 4 (Mitchell 6, 34, Vareille 58, Wright pen 66)
Aberdeen 0 Att: 9,875

Sunday, December 6

Hearts 2 (Adam 37, 49)
Celtic 1 (O'Donnell 74) Att: 17,334

Wednesday, December 9

St Johnstone 1 (Kernaghan 8)
Hearts 1 (Hamilton 32) Att: 5,784

Saturday, December 12

Aberdeen 2 (Winters 32, Jess 37)
Hearts 0 Att: 11,137

Dundee Utd 1 (Zetterlund 49)
Celtic 1 (Larsson 85) Att: 11,612

Dunfermline 1 (Smith 79)
Motherwell 1 (Spencer 47) Att: 5,182

Rangers 1 (Wallace 10)
Kilmarnock 0 Att: 49,781

St Johnstone 1 (Bollan 85)
Dundee 1 (Adamczuk 74) Att: 6,033

Wednesday, December 16

Motherwell 2 (Coyle 34, McMillan 77)
Dundee 1 (Adamczuk 37) Att: 5,890

Saturday, December 19

Celtic 5 (Larsson 55, 57pen, Mjallby 60, Moravcik 6, 72)
Dunfermline 0 Att: 59,024

Dundee 1 (Rae 18)
Aberdeen 2 (Winters 45, 83) Att: 6,340

Hearts 2 (Locke 2, Hamilton 69)
Rangers 3 (Guivarc'h 16, 63, Wallace 58) Att: 17,134

Motherwell 1 (Adams 27)
St Johnstone 2 (Connolly 31, Grant 72) Att: 9,731

Sunday, December 20

Kilmarnock 2
Dundee Utd 0

SCOTLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	18	11	4	3	34	16	37
Kilmarnock	19	9	7	3	27	11	34
Celtic	19	8	6	5	39	20	30
St Johnstone	19	7	8	4	23	25	29
Hearts	19	6	5	8	21	26	23
Motherwell	19	5	7	7	17	26	22
Dundee	18	5	5	8	17	25	20
Aberdeen	19	5	5	9	19	29	20
Dundee Utd	19	4	7	8	18	22	19
Dunfermline	19	2	10	7	15	30	16

LEAGUE FUP – FINAL

Nov 29: Rangers 2 St Johnstone 1

SPAIN

Friday, November 20

Tenerife 0
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Alexis og 60) Att: 17,000

Saturday, November 21

Alaves 2 (Gerard 28, Sivori 69)
Celta Vigo 0 Att: 15,000

Atletico Madrid 6 (Mena 27, Jugovic 41, Njegus 47, Correa 59, Kiko 74, Jose Mari 77)
Real Valladolid 1 (Julio Cesar 2) Att: 40,000

Real Oviedo 0
Betis 1 (Oli 33) Att: 11,000

Real Sociedad 0
Zaragoza 0 Att: 22,000

Mallorca 1 (Sergi og 19)
Barcelona 0 Att: 17,500

Valencia 3 (Angulo 35, Savio 57, Claudio Lopez 74)
Real Madrid 1 (Savio 57) Att: 54,000

Sunday, November 22

La Coruna 2 (Naybet 36, Turu Flores 49)
Villarreal 1 (Moises 15) Att: 15,000

Espanyol 1 (Nan Ribera 56)
Racing Santander 1 (Victor 72) Att: 13,200

Salamanca 2 (Cardetti 64, Munteanu 79)
Extremadura 1 (Felix 66) Att: 10,775

Saturday, November 28

Barcelona 0
Atletico Madrid 1 (Jugovic pen 39) Att: 100,000

Sunday, November 29

Athletic Bilbao 1 (Urzaiz 6)
Mallorca 0 Att: 30,000

Celta Vigo 2 (Mostovoi 32, Sanchez 55)
Valencia 2 (Popescu 21, A. Ilie 66) Att: 24,000

Extremadura 1 (Helguera og 34)
Espanyol 0 Att: 9,000

Racing Santander 0
Real Sociedad 1 (Kovacevic 67) Att: 14,907

Betis 1 (Finidi 56)
Tenerife 0 Att: 40,000

Valladolid 0
La Coruna 1 (Pauleta 5) Att: 17,000

Zaragoza 1 (Milosevic 6)
Real Oviedo 0 Att: 19,000

Villarreal 2 (Alberto 44, Gerardo 67)
Alaves 0 Att: 12,000

Saturday, December 5

Atletico Madrid 0
Athletic Bilbao 0 Att: 45,000

La Coruna 2 (Hadji 76, Fran 90)
Barcelona 1 (Rivaldo pen 89) Att: 35,000

Espanyol 0
Real Madrid 0 Att: 28,000

Real Sociedad 2 (De Paula 25, Idiakez 82)
Extremadura 0 Att: 21,000

Mallorca 1 (Dani 82)
Betis 0 Att: 12,971

Salamanca 1 (Cardetti 86)
Celta Vigo 1 (Mazinho 5) Att: 10,400

Sunday, December 6

Alaves 0
Valencia 1 (Claudio Lopez 65) Att: 15,000

Real Oviedo 1 (Dely Valdes 3)
Racing Santander 0 Att: 12,000

Tenerife 1 (Makaay 80)
Zaragoza 1 (Yordi 86) Att: 15,000

Villarreal 2 (Moises 36, 57)
Valladolid 1 (Peternac 65) Att: 11,000

Saturday, December 12

Betis Sevilla 0 Atletico Madrid 0 Att: 35,000

Sunday, December 13

Athletic Bilbao 2 (J. Etxeberria 30, Urzaiz 60)
La Coruna 1 (Pauleta 12) Att: 40,000

Barcelona 1 (Giovanni 82)
Villarreal 3 (Craioveanu 12, 24, Gerardo 75) Att: 50,000

Celta Vigo 2 (Penev 5, Michel Salgado 14)
Espanyol 0 Att: 23,000

Extremadura 0
Real Oviedo 1 (Dely Valdes 31) Att: 8,850

Racing Santander 0 Tenerife 0 Att: 15,000

Real Madrid 3 (Roberto Carlos 17, Raul 60, Seedorf 86)
Real Sociedad 2 (Kovacevic 51, 65) Att: 65,000

Real Valladolid 3 (Turiel 51, Peternac 69, 90)
Alaves 0 Att: 14,200

Real Zaragoza 0
Mallorca 1 (Marcelino 19) Att: 19,000

Valencia 1 (Angulo 76)
Salamanca 0 Att: 50,000

Saturday, December 19

La Coruna 2 (Djalminha 18pen, Schurrer 80)
Betis Sevilla 2 (Benjamin 16, Oli 89) Att: 25,000

Sunday, December 20

Villareal 0 Athletic Bilbao 1

Atletico Madrid 0 Zaragoza 0

Mallorca 1 Racing Santander 1

Oviedo 1 Real Madrid 0

Real Sociedad 2 Celta Vigo 0

Espanyol 2 Valencia 1

Tenerife 1 Extremadura 1

Alaves 1 Salamanca 0

Valladolid 0 Barcelona 1

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mallorca	15	8	5	2	16	6	29
Celta	15	6	7	2	25	16	25
Valencia	15	8	1	6	24	17	25
Deportivo	15	6	6	3	20	16	24
Oviedo	15	7	3	5	18	17	24
Atletico Madrid	15	6	5	4	22	14	23
Athletic Bilbao	15	7	2	6	21	21	23
Real Madrid	14	6	4	4	27	21	22
Barcelona	15	6	4	5	23	18	22
Real Sociedad	15	6	4	5	21	20	22
Zaragoza	15	6	3	6	18	19	21
Villareal	15	5	4	6	21	20	19
Betis	15	5	4	6	10	17	19
Racing	15	4	6	5	16	18	18
Valladolid	15	5	3	7	15	18	18
Espanyol	15	4	5	6	15	17	17
Alaves	15	4	3	8	10	18	15
Salamanca	14	4	3	7	12	21	15

SWITZERLAND

Saturday, November 21

Young Boys 1 (Kehrli 73)
Zurich 2 (Nixon 83, 85) Att: 3,350

Sunday, November 22

Grasshopper 2 (Tikva 47, Turkyilmaz 80)
Basle 1 (Perez 88) Att: 7,800

Lausanne 0 Servette 0 Att: 7,700

Lugano 0
Aarau 2 (Pavlicevi 62, Giannini og 90) Att: 2,380

St Gallen 0 Neuchatel Xamax 0 Att: 6,400

Sion 0 Lucerne 0 Att: 8,100

Saturday, November 28

Basle 1 (Frick 4)
Lausanne 1 (Pantelic 31) Att: 6,000

Servette 0
Young Boys 1 (Smajic 56) Att: 4,k563

Neuchatel Xamax 0
Grasshopper 2 (Kavelaschvili 37, Tikva 70) Att: 11,200

Sunday, November 29

Aarau 2 (Ivanov pen 17, pen 75)
Sion 2 (Tholot pen 78, 79) Att: 1,500

Lucerne 1 (Scepanovic 18)
St Gallen 1 (Dal Santo 43) Att: 7,253

Zurich 4 (Fischer 30, 87, Lima 71, Hodel 85)
Lugano 1 (Wegmann 83) Att: 3,800

Sunday, December 6

Aarau 0 Lucerne 0 Att: 2,400

Grasshopper 4 (Turkyilmaz 17, Comisetti 50, 82, Kavelaschvili 75)
St Gallen 1 (Vurens 35) Att: 3,400

Lausanne 1 (Schageldjan 11)
Neuchatel Xamax 0 Att: 4,700

Lugano 3 (Giallanza 42, 50, pen 84)
Servette 3 (Buhlmann 30, Karlen 82, Varela 86) Att: 800

FC Sion 0 Zurich 0 Att: 7,300

Young Boys 1 (Sawu 69)
Basle 2 (Rytchkov 5, Tschopp 56) Att: 5,300

Sunday, December 13

Basle 1 (Rschopp pen 45)
Lugano 3 (Wegmann 72, 79, Lombardo 80) Att: 34,745

Lucerne 1 (Moser 38)
Grasshopper 0 Att: 10,048

Neuchatel Xamax 1 (Isabella 40)
Young Boys 1 (Sawu 42) Att: 4,500

St Gallen 0
Lausanne 1 (Schageldjan 74) Att: 5,300

Servette 2 (Pizzinat 17, Rey pen 35)
FC Sion 1 (Tholot 72) Att: 7,635

Zurich 1 (Bamba 90)
Aarau 0 Att: 3,200

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Servette	22	12	8	2	38	24	44
Grasshopper	22	11	5	6	37	25	38
Zurich	22	10	8	4	33	21	38
Lausanne	22	10	8	4	36	33	38
Xamax	22	7	11	4	30	23	32
Basle	22	8	4	10	21	34	28
Luzern	22	6	9	7	26	25	27
St Gallen	22	7	6	9	31	31	27
Sion	22	5	8	9	22	36	23
Lugano	22	5	7	10	35	43	22
Young Boys	22	4	7	11	33	34	19
Aarau	22	3	7	12	28	41	16

TURKEY

Dec 4: Kocaelispor 0 Fenerbahce 3.
Dec 5: Erzurum 2 Istanbulspor 4.
Dec 6: Antalyaspor 3 Karabukspor 1; Sakaryaspor 1 Dardanelspor 3; Altay 3 Adanaspor 2; Gaziantepspor 1 Samsunspor 1; Besiktas 2 Trabzonspor 0; Bursaspor 1 Genclerbirligi 1.
Dec 11: Genclerbirligi 1 Kocaelispor 1.
Dec 12: Sakaryaspor 0 Besiktas 2; Galatasaray 3 Antalyaspor 1.
Dec 13: Adanaspor 4 Bursaspor 1; Dardanelspor 0 Erzurum 0; Karabukspor 2 Gaziantepspor 6; Samsunspor 1 Altay 0; Fenerbahce 2 Istanbulspor 0; Trabzonspor 1 Ankaragucu 0.
Dec 16: Galatasaray 2 Besiktas 0.
Dec 18: Bursaspor 2 Samsunspor 3.
Dec 19: Antalyaspor 0 Trabzonspor 1.
Dec 20: Altay 1 Karabukspor 0; Erzurum 0 Fenerbahce 2; Ankaragucu 1 Sakaryaspor 0; Istanbulspor 0 Genclerbirligi 0; Kocaelispor 2 Adanaspor 1; Besiktas 0 Dardanelspor 0; Gaziantepspor 1 Galatasaray 2.

TURKEY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fenerbahce	17	12	2	3	44	12	38
Besiktas	17	11	5	1	32	13	38
Galatasaray	16	11	3	2	45	17	36
Trabzonspor	17	11	3	3	28	16	36
Antalyaspor	17	9	3	5	23	16	30
Kocaelispor	17	8	4	5	21	19	28
Genclerbirligi	17	7	5	5	25	21	26
Istanbulspor	17	7	4	6	25	23	25
Bursaspor	17	7	3	7	31	34	24
Gaziantepspor	17	6	5	6	24	23	23
Samsunspor	17	6	3	8	22	32	21
Ankaragucu	16	6	1	9	19	22	19
Altay	17	5	3	9	22	32	18
Adanaspor	17	5	2	10	17	25	17
Erzurum	17	4	5	8	18	37	17
Sakaryaspor	17	2	4	11	13	29	10
Dardanelspor	17	1	7	9	8	24	10
Karabukspor	17	2	2	13	12	34	8

SOUTH AMERICA

MERCOSUR CUP

Semi-final, 2nd leg

Dec 3 - Buenos Aires (Arg)
San Lorenzo (Arg) **1** (Basavilbaso 40)
Cruzeiro (Bra) **1** (Djair 65)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** U. Aquino (Par)
Cruzeiro 2-1 on agg
San Lorenzo: O. Passet, H. Ameli, E. Tuzzio, I. Cordoba, E. Coudet (Paredes 45), C. Rivadero, F. Lussenhoff, F. Basavilbaso, N. Gorosito, R. Estevez (Biaggio 60), A. Acosta.
Cruzeiro: Paulo Cesar *(sent off 89)*, Gustavo, Marcelo Djian, Wilson Gottardo, Gilberto, Marcos Paulo, Djair (Valdir 81), Valdo, Muller, Marcelo Ramos, Fabio Junior.

Final, 1st leg

Dec 16 - Belo Horizonte (Bra)
Cruzeiro (Bra) **2** (Marcelo Ramos 21, Fabio Junior 90)
Palmeiras (Bra) **1** (Roque Junior 46)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** S. Marinho (Bra). **Att:** 19,000.
Cruzeiro: Dida, Gustavo, Marceloa Djan, Joe Carlos, Gilberto, Valdir, Ricardinho, Caio (Alex Alves 65), Valdo (Djair 77), Muller, Marcelo Ramos (Fabio Junior 79). (Agnaldo 83)
Palmeiras: Velloso, Nenem, Junior Paiano, Cleber, Junios, Roque Junior, Arce (Almir 79), Rogerio, Zinho, Paulo Nunes, Oseas (Alex 45).

MERCONORTE CUP

Final, 1st leg

Dec 3 - Medellin
Atletico Nacional (Col) **3** (Vasquez 29, 72, Perea 61)
Deportivo Cali (Col) **1** (Zapata pen 49)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** F. Russi (Col). **Att:** 3,000.
Nacional: M. Calero, W. Fiorillo (J. Madrid 86), L. Perea, L. Orejuela, R. Martinez, P. Alvarez, J. Villa, F. Grisales, C. Valencia, A. mas, D. Ceballos (L. Munoz 73).
Cali: R. Dudamel, F. Hurtado, M. Valencia, E. Rivas, A. Viveros, M. Zapata, J. Patino, A. Betancourt (C. Castillo 22), M. Torres, W. Escobar, G. Cordoba (*sent off 86).*

Final - 2nd leg

Dec 10 - Cali (Col)
Deportivo Cali (Col) **0**
Atletico Nacional (Col) **1** (Morrantes 6)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** O. Ruiz (Col). **Att:** 6,000.
Nacional 4-1 on agg
Dep Cali: J. Mendoza, F. Hurtado, M. Valencia, A. Hurtado, E. Rivas, O. Rogeiro, F. Arce, J. Patino, A. Viveros, M. Torres, J. Diaz (B. Castillo 70).
At Nacional: M. Calero, V. Marulanda, E. Palacios, L. Orejuela, F. Mosquera, P. Alvarez, D. Rueda, J. Villa (R. Martinez 65), N. Morantes, C. Vasquez (D. Caballos 46), J. Moreno (L. Munoz 88).

ARGENTINA

Opening championship

Monday, November 30

Colon Santa Fe 2 (Fuertes 6, Gorostidi 49)
Argentinos Juniors 3 (Quinteros 45, 49, Coca 79)

Friday, December 4

River Plate 1 (Escudero 87)
Platense 0

Independiente 2 (Lopez 44, Sanchez pen 54)
Gimnasia y Esgrima de la Plata 2 (Gatti 84, 90)

Saturday, December 5

Talleres Cordoba 1 (Garay 84)
Belgrano Cordoba 0

Union Santa Fe 1 (Cabrol pen 61)
Gimnasia y Esgrima Jujuy 3 (Juarez 6, Sandy 35, Balvorin 90)

Rosario Central 2 (Carracedo 15, Pierucci 20
Huracan 0

Estudiantes de la Plata 1 (Farias 81)
Racing Club 0

Sunday, December 6

Lanus 1 (Belloso 11)
Boca Juniors 1 (Barijho 69)

San Lorenzo 2 (Romeo 45, Lussenhoff 86)
Newell's Old Boys 2 (Cobelli 16, Manso 44)

Velez Sarsfield 2 (Bassedas 52, Pandolfi pen 89)
Colon Santa Fe 0

Monday, December 7

Argentinos Juniors 1 (Brizuela 19)
Ferro Carril Oeste 1 (MacAllister 82)

Friday, December 11

Independiente 1 (V. Lopez 30)
Huracan 1 (Mohamed 85)

Saturday, December 12

Colon Santa Fe 1 (Monserrat 72)
River Plate 1 (Alvarez 70)

Gimnasia y Esgrima Jujuy 3 (Balborin pen 44, Boasso 57, Mancia 78)
Ferro Carril Oeste 4 (Guerra 35, Chaparro pen 39, Mandra 45, Rodriguez 89)

Newell's Old Boys 4 (Saldana 6, Cobelli 22, Crosa 37, Real 49)
Talleres Cordoba 2 (Garay 29, Astudillo 55)

Belgrano Cordoba 0 Rosario Central 0

Sunday, December 13

Platense 3 (Bravo 24, Chatruc 58, Erbin 61)
Estudiantes de la Plata 2 (Furiga 15, Fatias 28)

Boca Juniors 3 (Palermo 4, pen 51, Arruabarrana 8)
Union Santa Fe 1 (Castillo 56)

Velez Sarsfield 2 (Pandolfi 90, Roy Gronzalez 92)
Argentinos Juniors 5 (Cartes 2, Brizuela 23, 85, Quinteros 31, 33)

Racing Club 3 (D. Capria 14, Morales 36, Delgado 50)
San Lorenzo 2 (Romeo 8, D. Capria og)

Monday, December 14

Gimnasia y Esgrima de la Plata 1 (Parayra 71)
Lanus 0

ARGENTINA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Boca Juniors	19	§13	6	0	45	18	45
Gim y Esg. Plata	19	10	6	3	31	23	36
Racing Club	19	9	6	4	39	28	33
Lanus	19	8	6	5	20	20	30
Colon Santa Fe	19	7	5	7	28	27	26
San Lorenzo	19	6	7	6	40	35	25
Argentinos Jnrs	19	5	10	4	31	27	25
Newell's Old Boys	19	6	7	6	22	21	25
Union Santa Fe	19	6	7	6	32	34	25
Rosario Central	19	6	7	6	25	28	25
Velez Sarsfield	19	6	6	7	26	26	24
Estudiantes de LP	19	6	6	7	22	23	24
Talleres Cordoba	19	7	3	9	28	33	24
Gim y Esg.Jujuy	19	4	10	5	31	30	22
River Plate	19	5	7	7	27	27	22
Independiente	19	4	10	5	26	26	22
Ferro Carril Oeste	19	5	5	0	24	31	20
Huracan	19	5	5	9	29	42	20
Belgrano Cordoba	19	4	7	8	22	31	19
Platense	19	3	4	12	21	39	13

Relegation averages (points over last three seasons) - bottom places: FC Oeste 1.210; Gimnasia Jujuy 1.189; Platense 1.147; Union 1,073; Belgrano 1.000; Huracan 0.894. (Bottom two relegated)

BRAZIL

National championship, semi-finals

Nov 6: Portuguesa 2 Cruzeiro 1; Corinthians 2 Santos 0.
Dec 9: Corinthians 1 Santos 1
4-4 on agg, Corinthians in final on better first stage record

Final (over three legs)

Dec 13: Cruzeiro 2 Corinthians 2.
Dec 20: Corinthians 1 Cruzeiro 1.

BOLIVIA

Second stage - final round

Dec 2: Real Santa Cruz 0 Blooming 2; Jorge Wilsterman 2 Independiente Petrolero 1; San Jose 5 Real Potosi 3.
Dec 6: Real Potosi 6 Real Santa Cruz 1; Independiente Petrolero 1 San Jose 0; Blooming 1 Wilsterman 0.

2ND STAGE – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Blooming	10	7	2	1	16	7	23
J. Wilsterman	10	6	1	3	19	13	19
San Jose	10	4	2	4	16	13	14
Ind. Petrolero	10	4	1	5	13	13	13
Real Potosi	10	3	2	5	20	20	11
Real Santa Cruz	10	1	2	7	6	24	5

Blooming play first stage winner Wilsterman for title

Final

Dec 9: Blooming 3 Jorge Wilsterman 0
Dec 13: Wilsterman 1 Blooming 0
Blooming 3-1 on agg

CHILE

FIRST DIVISION - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colo Colo	30	19	7	4	54	19	64
Univ Chile	30	18	9	3	62	37	63
Univ Catolica	30	14	11	5	57	34	53
Cobreloa	30	16	3	11	50	31	51
Concepcion	30	12	9	9	39	41	45
Huachipato	30	11	7	12	39	48	40
Purerto Montt	30	10	9	11	43	36	39
Iquique	30	12	3	15	35	44	39
La Serena	30	10	7	13	39	47	37
Palestino	30	9	9	12	50	42	36
Rangers Tacna	30	9	7	14	44	49	34
Audax Italiano	30	9	7	14	37	51	34
Coquimbo Unido	30	8	9	13	36	50	33
Osorno	30	8	7	15	41	62	31
Wanderers	30	6	12	12	37	42	30
Termuco*	30	5	10	15	31	61	10

**15 pts deducted for not turning up.*

2nd place play-off

(For Libertadores Cup place)
Dec 17: Concepcion 1 Univ de Chile 3; Cobreloa 2 Univ Catolica 2
Dec 19: Univ de Chile 1 Concepcion 0 *(Univ 4-1 on agg)*; Univ Catolica 0 Cobreloa 0 *(2-2 on agg, Univ Catolica on away goals)*

COLOMBIA

Final round

Dec 3: *Group A:* Dep. Quindio 4 Independiente Medellin 1; Independiente Santa Fe 1 Once Caldas 2; *Group B:* At. Nacional 1 America 3; Dep. Cali 3 Millonarios 0.
Dec 6: *Group A:* Dep. Quindio 3 Independiente Santa Fe 2; Independiente Medellin 1 Once Caldas 0; *Group B:* Millonarios 1 America 1 *(Millonarios 4-3 on pens)*; Dep. Cali 1 At. Nacional 1 *(Nacional 4-1 on pens)*.
Dec 9: *Group A:* Once Caldas 1 Quindio 1 *(Once Caldas 5-4 on pens)*; Independiente Santa Fe 2 Independiente Medellin 3; Group B: Atletico Nacional 3 Millonarios 1; Deportivo Cali 2 America 2 *(Cali 3-1 on pens)*.

FINAL ROUND - FINAL

GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Bo	Pts
Once Caldas	6	3	2	1	7	5	3.5	14.5
Ind. Medellin	6	6	4	0	7	7	1	13
Dep. Quindio	6	2	2	2	9	8	0	8
Ind. Santa Fe	6	1	0	5	8	11	0	3

GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Bo	Pts
Dep. Cali	6	3	3	0	13	6	0.75	13.75
At. Nacional	6	12	3	2	8	9	3.25	9.25
America	6	2	2	2	9	10	1.25	9.25
Millonarios	6	1	2	3	6	11	2	7

Bp = bonus points for finishing in leading places during regular championship and extra point for winning penalty shootout after draws

Championship Final

Dec 16: Dep. Cali 4 Once Caldas 0
Dec 20: Once Caldas 0 Dep Cali 0
Cali 4-0 on agg

ECUADOR

Second stage – final round

Dec 6: Dep. Quito 0 Aucas 2; Liga Univ. de Quito 1 Barcelona 1 (Barcelona 4-2 on pens).
Dec 13: Barcelona 2 Liga Univ. Quito 2 *(Barcelona 4-3 on pens)*; Aucas 2 Dep. Quito 2 *(Dep. Quito 4-2 on pens).*
Dec 16: Aucas 1 Barcelona 0; Univ. Quito 1 Dep. Quito 0.
Dec 20: Liga Univ. Quito 3 Aucas 1; Barcelona 5 Dep. Quito 0.

EQUADOR - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Bp	Pts
Liga Dep.Un.Quito	6	3	2	1	9	6	0	11
Barcelona	6	2	2	2	9	6	2	10
Aucas	6	3	1	2	7	6	0	10
Dep. Quito	6	1	1	4	3	10	1	5

Bp = extra point for winning penalty shootout after drawn match.

PARAGUAY

Championship final

Dec 5: Olimpia 3 Cerro Porto 1
Olimpia 5-3 on agg

PERU

Closing championship

Dec 6: Municipal 0 Sport Boys 1; Lawn Tennis 1 Alianza Lima 5; Melgar 0 Sporting Cristal 1; Universitario 3 Alianza Atletico 1; Union Minas 0 Cienciano 0; Dep. Pesquero 2 Aurich 1.
Dec 13: Melgar 3 Union Mins 1; Alianza Lima 2 Aurich 1; Universitario 3 Lawn Tennis 0; Sporting Cristal 7 Municipal 2; Cienciano 0 Sport Boys 0; Alianza Atletico 0 Dep. Pasquero 0.

PERU - FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sporting Cristal*	22	13	3	6	41	23	42
Alianza Lima*	22	11	9	2	35	17	42
Sport Boys	22	12	6	4	24	12	42
Universitario	22	8	10	4	32	22	34
Cienciano**	22	7	9	6	23	20	29
Dep. Pesquero	22	7	8	7	20	20	29
Melgar	22	8	5	9	26	33	29
Juan Aurich	22	6	8	8	24	27	26
Alianza Atletico	22	6	6	10	24	30	24
Union Minas	22	6	6	10	22	30	24
Lawn Tennis***	22	6	4	12	20	38	22
Dep. Municipal	22	3	4	15	24	43	13

**Sporting Cristal won 1st place play-off 1-0.*
*** One point deducted for fielding too many foreigners.*
**** Relegated with lowest pts total in both championships.*

Final, 1st leg

Dec 20: Sporting Cristal 2 Universitario *(opening championship winners)* 1.

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LGE

GROUP A

Dynamos 0
Hearts of Oak 1 (Joe Fameyeh 87')

Etoile Sahel 5 (Mounir Boukadioda 21, 58, Riadh Jelassi 71, Raouene 81, Bargui 89)
Eagle Cement 0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dynamos	6	3	1	2	6	3	10
Hearts of Oak	6	3	1	2	7	6	10
Etoile Sahel	6	3	0	3	11	7	9
Eagle Cement	6	2	0	4	3	11	6

GROUP B

Raja Casablanca 2 (Jallal Garmoss 59, Moeti Khasu 69og)
Manning Rangers 1 (Kerryn Jordan 24)
Young Africans 0
ASEC Abidjan 3 (Tchiressoa Guel 12, Aliou Sisi Badra 69, Baleghue Tagio 89)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
ASEC Abidjan	6	4	1	1	10	4	13
Manning Rangers	6	3	1	2	9	6	10
Raja Casablanca	6	2	2	2	12	7	8
Young Africans	6	0	2	4	5	19	2

CUP-WINNERS CUP

Final (2 legs

Esperance 3 (Radhi Jaaidi 6, Ayadi Hamrouni 44 pen, Sami Laaroussi 55)
Primiero Agosto 1 (Mwanza 2)

Primiero Agosto 1 (Nsilulu 42)
Esperance 1 (Sofiene Melliti 90)
Esperance 4-2 on agg

CAF CUP

Final (2 legs)

Jeanne d'Arc 0
CS Sfaxien 1 (Ben Ahmed Nassir 70')

CS Sfaxien 3 (Mohamed Salah Meftah 14', 69', Skander Souayeh 86' pen)
Jeanne d'Arc 0
CS Sfax 4-0 on agg

ASIA

JAPAN

J. LEAGUE – SECOND STAGE

Nov 3: Consaldole Sapporo 3 Vissel Kobe 0; Kashima Anters 1 Jubilo Iwata 0; Kashiwa Reysol 1 Bellmare Hiratsuka 3; Yokohama Marinos 3 Urawa Reds 2; Gamba Osaka 2 Nagoya Grampus Eight 3; Shimizu S-Pulse 0 Verdy Kawasaki 0 *(S-Pulse 4-2 on pens)*; Cerezo Osaka 1 Kyoto Purple Sanga 2; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1 Yokohama Flugels 2; Avispa Fukuoka 2 Jef United Ichihara 1.
Nov 7: Jef United Ichihara 1 Consadole Sapporo 3; Yokohama Flugels 2 Avispa Fukuoka 1; Bellmare Hiratsuka 2 Gamba Osaka 1; Jubilo Iwata 4 Kashiwa Reysol 0; Nagoya Grampus Eight 3 Yokohama Marinos 2 (aet); Kyoto Purple Sanga 1 Urawa Reds 3; Cerezo Osaka 0 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1; Vissel Kobe 3 Shimizu S-Pulse 0; Verdy Kawasaki 1 Kashima Antlers 2 (aet).
Nov 14: Consadole Sapporo 1 Yokohama Flugels 4; Kashima Antlers 4 Vissel Kobe 1; Kashiwa Reysol 2 Verdy Kawasaki 1; Urawa Reds 2 Nagoya Grampus Eight 1; Yokohama Marinos 4 Bellmare Hiratsuka 2; Shimizu S-Pulse 4 Jef United Ichihara 1; Gamba Osaka 4 Jubilo Iwata 5; Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1 Kyoto Purple Sanga 2 (aet); Avispa Fukuoka 0 Cerezo Osaka 2.

J. LEAGUE SECOND STAGE - FINAL

	P	W1	W2	W3	L	F	A	Pts
Kashima Antlers	17	12	3	0	2	38	15	42
Jubilo Iwata	17	13	0	0	4	55	21	39
Urawa Reds	17	11	0	0	6	32	17	33
Yokohama Marinos	17	10	1	0	6	40	27	32
Shimizu S-Pulse	17	8	3	1	5	39	21	31
Grampus Eight	17	9	1	1	6	34	26	30
Yokohama Flugels	17	8	0	1	8	37	32	25
Kashiwa Reysol	17	8	0	1	8	24	26	25
Sanfrecce Hiroshima	17	7	1	1	8	23	19	24
*Consadole Sapporo	17	8	0	0	9	29	30	24
Kyoto Purple Sanga	17	6	2	1	8	27	30	23
Bellmare Hiratsuka	17	7	0	1	9	26	32	22
Cerezo Osaka	17	7	0	0	10	20	32	21
*Vissel Kobe	17	5	0	1	11	25	41	16
*Avispa Fukuoka	17	4	1	0	12	11	38	14
Gamba Osaka	17	3	2	0	12	20	32	13
Verdy Kawasaki	17	3	0	0	14	13	28	9
*JEF United Ichihara	17	1	0	1	15	18	44	4

W1=Win in 90 mins (3 pts.); W2=Win in extra time (2 pts.); W3= Win on penalties (1 pt.)
**Teams going to the relegation play-offs on the basis of the combined results of the last two seasons.*

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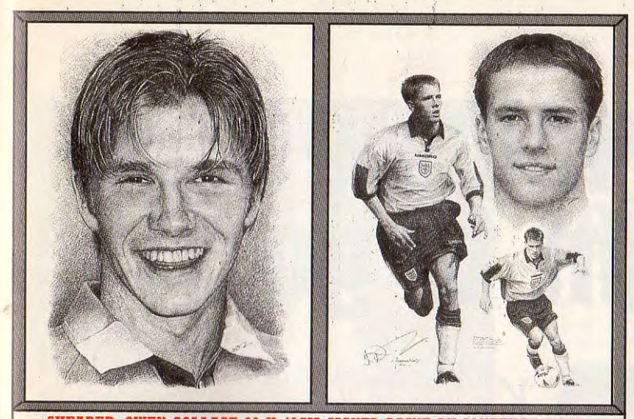

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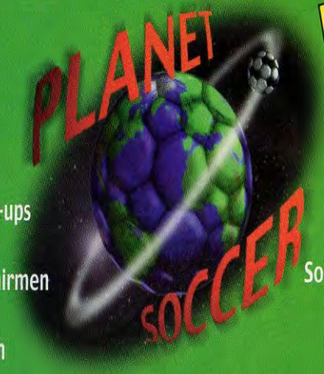

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Brian Glanville's LAST WORD

'FA chairman Keith Wiseman is a man I have never met, and never wanted to'

Kelly: A failure who was right to go

Blundering out...shocking mistakes marked Kelly's time at the FA

KELLY THE JELLY shakes no more at Lancaster Gate. I can't pretend I'm sorry to see the back of him, though for all his deficiencies I've always liked the man. Besides, he should be able to struggle through for a while with his £400,000 compensation.

By contrast, Keith Wiseman is a man I have never met, and never wanted to. How cleverly he schemed and planned his elevation to the position of FA chairman, even after the Premiership – followed in due course by UEFA – had sent him away with a flea in his ear. And then he had the impertinence to cling on; in contrast, Graham Kelly at least had the decency to fall on his sword.

That Kelly cut a dismally tedious figure in public, as was so often said, was neither here nor there. He is a decent, amiable fellow, and good company in private. The charge against him was that he made so many shocking mistakes, quite apart from the perversity of the £3.2million payment to the greedy Welsh FA (the Northern Irish turned it down) for the disgraceful purpose of unseating David Will, the competent Scottish representative on the FIFA executive. We now know that even were the ineffable Wiseman to attain the executive he would be disqualified from voting on any matter directly relating to England, including the bid to stage the 2006 World Cup.

It was Kelly, a former secretary of the Football League, who was responsible for establishing what I have always called the Greed Is Good League, when he joined hands with the First Division clubs to form a new Championship, at the expense of the Football League.

I said at the time and have maintained ever since that this was an appalling surrender of objectivity by the FA, whose sacred and historic task has always been to hold the ring, to be above the conflict, to mediate where necessary between the demands of the professional clubs and the needs of the game at large.

Years ago, the embattled and xenophobic Alan Hardaker, the man who bullied Chelsea out of contesting the first version of the European Cup and saw to it that Manchester United could not compete in 1958-59, after Munich, was at daggers drawn with the FA. It was for this reason that Hardaker promoted the Football League Cup as a potential rival to the mother of all competitions, the FA Cup.

Kelly also seemed to be in thrall to the egregious Charlie 'Long Ball' Hughes, whose old-fashioned, rigid theories poisoned the wells of the game for so long, in their misbegotten orthodoxy. "Glanville will be brought to justice!" proclaimed Hughes many years ago in an interview with my then young colleague Nick Pitt of the *Sunday Times*. Well, it hasn't happened yet and ding dong, the witch is dead. Charlie "Brazil have got it wrong" Hughes has blessedly gone.

But it was hard to forgive Kelly The Jelly when he backed Hughes over the notorious Peter Mendham case. Mendham, once an accomplished Norwich City winger and at the time in question a Norwich community executive, was distressed when he took the full FA coaching badge at Lilleshall and was failed, though his marks were good. For him – and for me – the reason was plain. He had dared to question the prevailing orthodoxy. Yet two professional players who turned up days late for the course both passed, while another caught cheating in an exam was allowed to take it again, and passed.

When Mendham complained, he got a typically acerbic, arrogant letter from Hughes. When the case was presented to Kelly, he opined that nothing was amiss. Hughes and his misbegotten theories flourished under Kelly's regime.

Then there was the John Uzzell-Gary Blissett case, when the former, a Torquay player, had his career ended by a Blissett elbow in the face. There was a trial, at which Kelly quite gratuitously appeared. My learned friends assure me that he should have been ruled out of court. Instead, his bizarre evidence – he insisted that he "might see 200 of such offences in a week" – materially helped Blissett to wriggle off the hook.

Yes, I'm glad Kelly has gone, though I well remember the lines of Hilaire Belloc: "Always keep a-hold of nurse, for fear of finding something worse."

Full of surprises...Luis Boa Morte and Co won unexpectedly in Athens

Football's charm shines again

IN ALL the excitement of Manchester United qualifying for the quarter-finals of the Champions League, Arsenal's, or Arsenal Reserves', astonishing victory in Athens against Panathinaikos in their final Euro match went largely unconsidered.

Yet it seemed exquisitely to illustrate the sheer unpredictability of football, which is part of its maddening charm.

Consider the context. Arsenal, down and out in Europe, deprived of all but three first-choice players, were obliged to play a Panathinaikos team with a solid chance of qualifying for the last eight. Although a virtual Arsenal reserve team had beaten Derby in the Worthington Cup, a team similarly bereft of first-teamers then went down 5-0 at home in the next round to Chelsea, also below full strength, though substantially better accoutred.

In Athens, only David Seaman, Steve Bould – no longer a first-choice defender – and the gifted but unpredictable Nicolas Anelka, were genuine *titolari*, as the Italians say. All looked done and dusted, not least to those such as myself who had joined the chorus complaining of Arsenal's inactivity in the summer transfer market.

Yet in the event the young Gunners won in a canter, surpassing themselves.

They did so despite giving debuts to the likes of David Grondin, the 18-year-old Frenchman, and the teenage midfielder Paolo Vernazza. They scored three goals, the first, admittedly, a rampant deflection of a Mendez free-kick, but they made numerous other chances.

Was it no more than a one-off, an isolated event with no greater significance? Panathinaikos at Wembley had given Arsenal a run for their money and lost only 2-1. But with what seemed a far stronger side, Arsenal four days later went to Villa Park, threw away a two-goal lead and lost.

Platt: lucky to get the chance

THE David Platt-Sampdoria affair showed Samp's president, Enrico Mantovani, at his most obstinate, superficial and wrong-headed.

True, Italian football had quite often enrolled managers from abroad who did not possess the requisite certificate from Coverciano, the Florentine coaching centre; men who got round the problem by sitting in the stand while a stooge sat on the bench. But at least they, on the whole, had substantial managerial experience. Platt has none at all; and Mantovani knew before he appointed him that there was going to be trouble. In Italian football at large, Platt's appointment was seen as an aberration.

You could well link Mantovani and the president of Inter, Massimo Moratti, as what the Italians call *figli di papa*: Daddy's spoilt boys. After all, Moratti had only just fired Gigi Simoni in mid-season and installed Romania's Mircea Lucescu – on a temporary basis, having lined up Juve's Marcello Lippi for next season despite the failings of Juventus in this one.

Yet to kick out Simoni when he did, Moratti was behaving irrationally. The team, even if they had played poorly at home against Salernitana, had just beaten Real Madrid 3-1, and thus qualified for the Champions League quarter-finals. Moreover, Simoni had just received his award as Serie A Manager of the Year for the previous season.

Not a bad achievement for a manager who nearly got the boot before that season had even begun, and who seemed in severe danger when he left Roberto Baggio out of a side well beaten by Real Madrid in the Euro tournament.

Lucescu promised that in three months he would revolutionise the team. I hope he will, as one who has known him well since his days as captain, let alone manager, of the Romanian national team. But there was an almost instant challenge to his limited authority at Vicenza in his first League game when Taribo West, substituted in favour of Michael Sylvestre, threw his shirt at Lucescu as he left the field.

There was partial consolation: Sylvestre went on to score the very late equaliser for Internazionale.

Enrico Mantovani is the son of a shipping magnate, Paolo Mantovani, heart and soul of Sampdoria in their salad days, when the 'terrible twins', Gianluca Vialli and Roberto Mancini, ran riot. Enrico is considered to be the palest shadow of his father.

Massimo Moratti is the son of the ruthless and formidable Angelo, *il gran petrolifero*, the great oil man, under whose aegis Inter were notorious for bribing or trying to bribe referees.

The son also rises. Well, sometimes. In these cases, not quite far enough.

A legend in Padua...Norman Adcock

Farewell, Norman

SAD that Norman Adcock, whose fascinating career as a centre-forward in Italy I celebrated in these pages in March 1997, should have died.

What would have happened had Milan signed him from Padova in 1948, as they wanted, rather than then acquiring the great Gunnar Nordahl and building the Grenoli trio?

Adcock was a hero in Padua to the very end, while we forget our footballing heroes in a matter of months.

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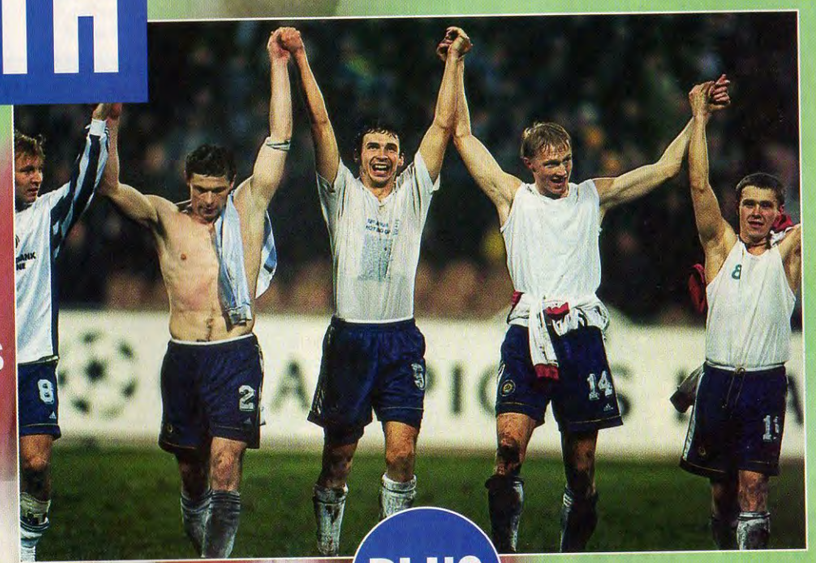

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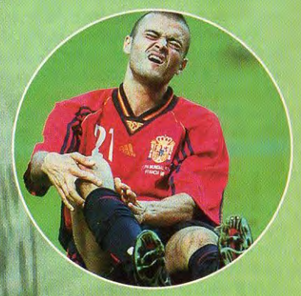

International focus: Spain

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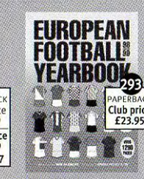

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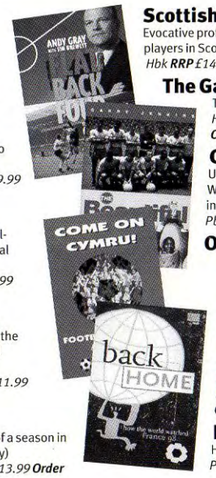

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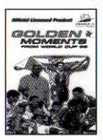

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